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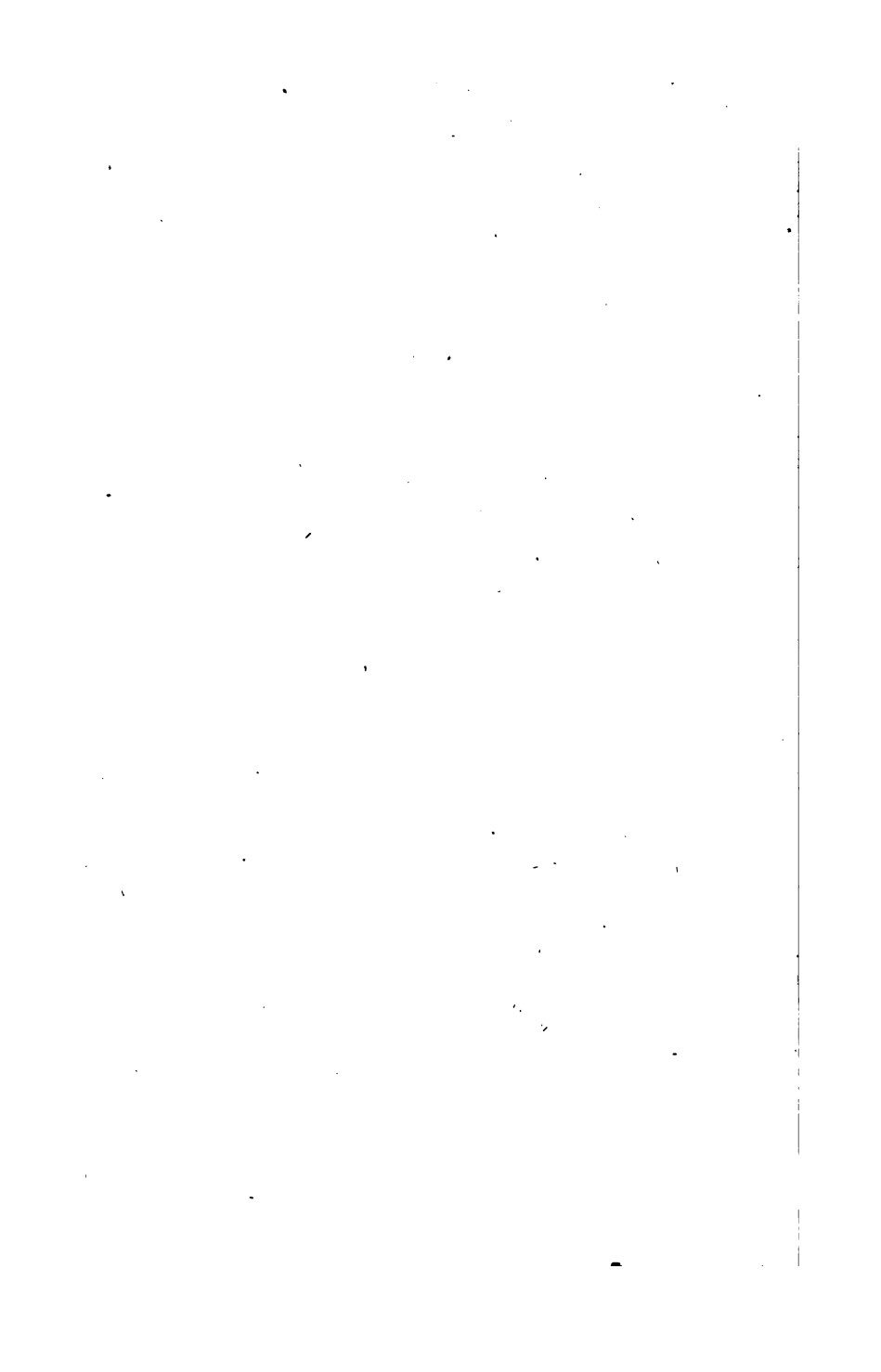




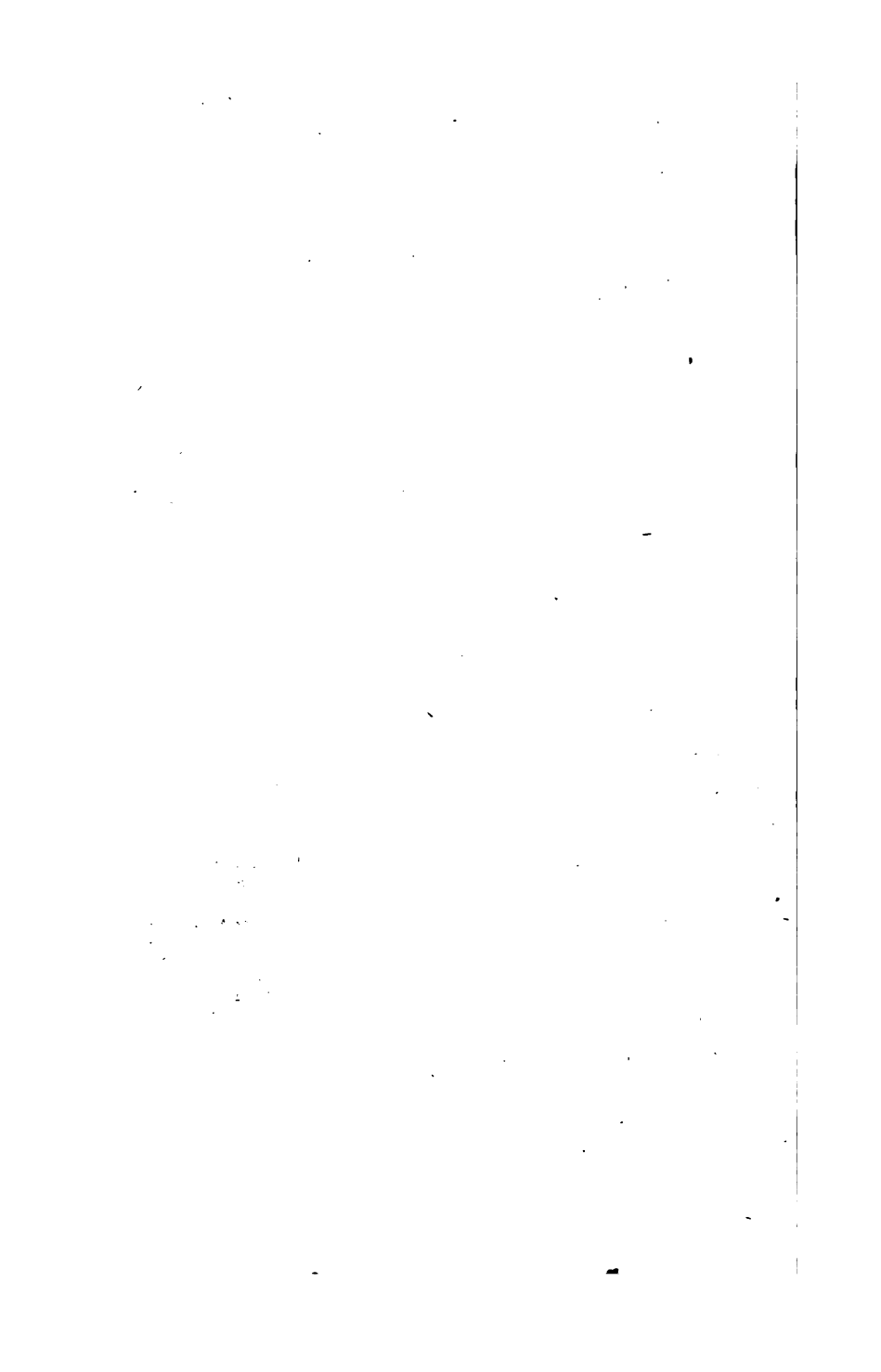
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THINGS
BY THEIR
RIGHT NAMES;
A NOVEL,
IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF
"PLAIN SENSE," AND "DISOBEDIENCE."

Let us "encompass virtue with associations more than mortal;
associations whose steady light may survive the waving and
meteorous gleams of sentimental illusion."—ANONYMOUS.

Quarterly Review.

—"Servant of God, well done! Well hast thou fought;
And for the testimony of truth hast borne
Universal reproach, far worse to bear
Than violence; this was all thy care,
To stand approv'd in sight of God, though worlds
Judg'd thee perverse."—

SECOND EDITION.
VOL. II.

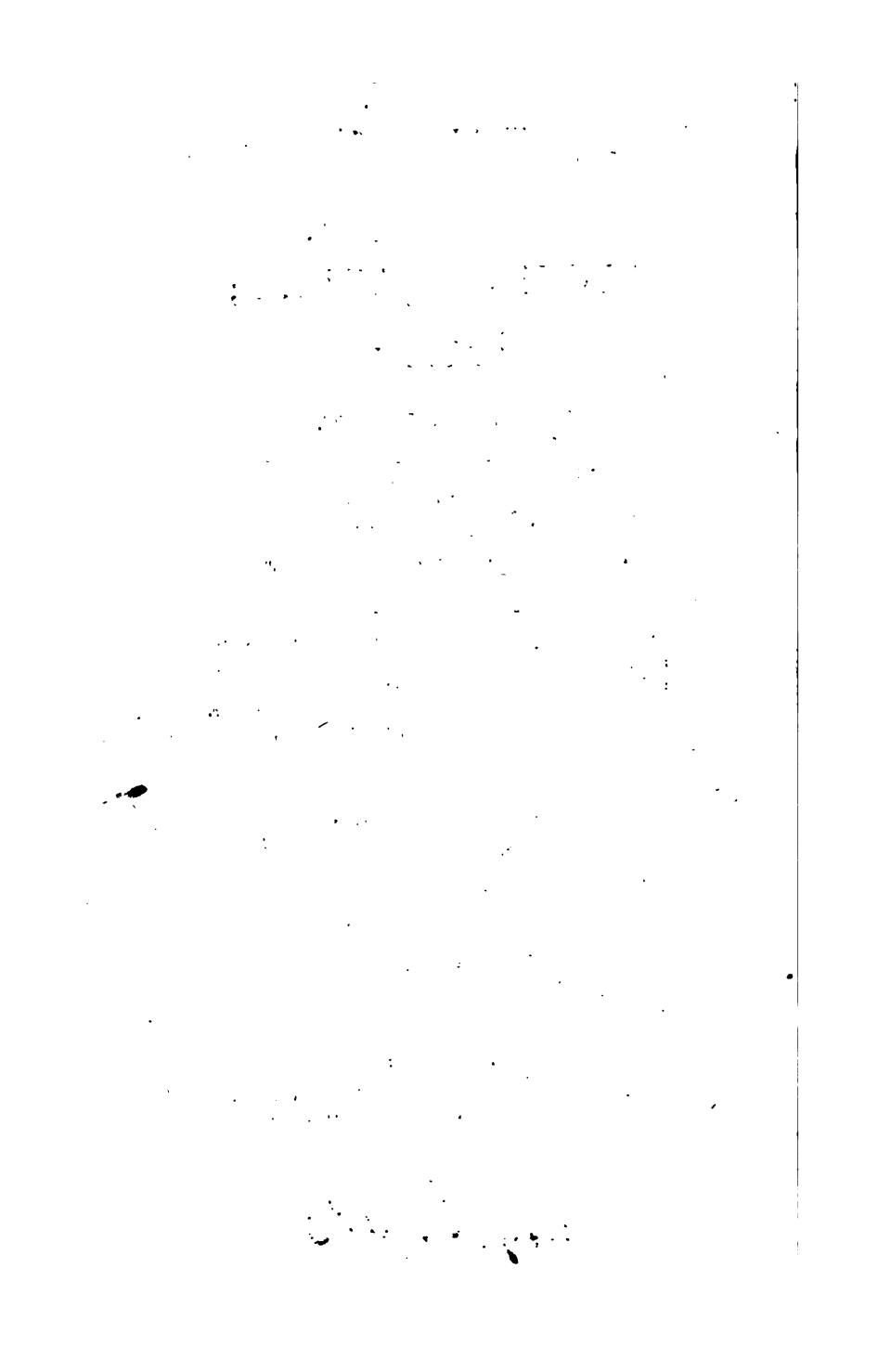


LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. AND S. ROBINSON, AND GALE, CURTIS
AND FENNER, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1814.

249. v. 363.



THINGS
BY THEIR
RIGHT NAMES.

CHAP. I.

WHILE such were the different feelings of the Envilles and Mr. Fitzosborn, Edward received the information of Caroline's detention at Henhurst with great and genuine joy ; a joy that sparkled in his eyes, and spread itself over his whole demeanour, but which he did not suffer to rise to his tongue. From whatever cause the pleasure sprung, it was such as he did not care to avow, while it was at the same time so powerful as wholly to outweigh any regrets which it may naturally be supposed he must have felt for the loss of her society ; and while he

was consoled with on every side on so decided an overthrow of all his hopes, he revelled in the most delightful anticipations of the future. Unrestrained by any of those feelings which had withheld the pen of Caroline, Edward joined to the large packet of letters which her servant conveyed to Henhurst, the following epistle.

“ I congratulate you, my dear cousin, from the bottom of my heart, on the change in your abode, but I congratulate my uncle still more; the exercise of your virtues will be the reward of his: the scenes in which you have lately been engaged are going to fade from your memory; but whatever else you forget, do not forget. EDWARD.”

Caroline read this billet over and over: she wished to find in it something more than the effusion of cousinly affection, but she could make no such discovery. She read it till she began to think that it was scarcely so much. Not one expression

of regret for her absence—not one lamentation that they were to meet no more—not the shadow of an attempt to engage her in any intercourse. “He is more interested for my uncle than for me,” thought Caroline: “he is willing that my virtues should make any body happy rather than himself; be it so: in the oblivion that he predicts I must endeavour to include the exception for which he stipulates, an exception that seems rather dictated by vanity than affection.”

Caroline was now established at Henhurst, and it appeared the delight of her uncle to honour her, and to make all those who approached her to do the same; but, except servants and dependants, the number of these were few. All female visitors had long disappeared from Henhurst; and although Mr. Fitzosborn seemed to lament the want of society in which Caroline was left, the dread of breaking in upon long-continued habits prevailed over his desire to procure her the gratification of company. He had

besides a rooted belief, that in the conversation of more than half the human species there was contamination. Caroline was in his eye a gem of the purest lustre, and to guard her from every breath that could sully her brightness became his most assiduous care. "Shall I have snatched her from the contagion of London," said he to himself, "and shall I expose her to the corruption of the country? Better that she should live alone than be the worse for the company she keeps; her pleasures will be few, but her virtues may be many. She shall be my almoner,—she shall be my umpire,—she shall learn to refer her actions to principles,—she will exercise her patience in being my companion, and her good humour in being so cheerfully. But Caroline must marry; and whom will she see in my house that she ought to marry? It is not, however, necessary that she should marry yet; and a few years may send me out of the world and her into it; yes; and better fitted to fulfil her part there; than if her earlier years

had been passed in the frivolous amusements which make in general the business of her sex."

The conclusion was, that Caroline must live *tête-à-tête* with her uncle at Henhurst, and content herself with the duties of life rather than the enjoyment of its pleasures.

Happily for Caroline, these terms were not so much in opposition in her nomenclature as in that of most others. With her they generally meant the same thing; and when any distinction arose, she was mistress of a kind of moral alchymy which knew well how to transmute the lead to gold; nor was it long before she found that one of her first duties in her new situation was indeed her highest gratification.

To amuse and gratify her uncle she had proposed as her first temporal aim, and in pursuing it she became herself so much amused and gratified, that time with her had never passed more quickly than at Henhurst.

Of the eccentricities, the humours,

the misanthropy of her uncle, she had heard; for by his eccentricities, his humours, and his misanthropy, he was known to the world. But his talents, his virtues, and his benevolence, had never reached her ears; for these were exerted alone for the amusement of himself, or the advantage of those who received his bounty, and flourished under his protection; as too many receive the bounty, and flourish under the protection of Providence, without ever adverting to the cause of their well-doing, or even speaking of it with gratitude.

Naturally gifted with a strong understanding, which had been sedulously cultivated in his youth, and duly exercised during the progress of his life, the conversation of Mr. Fitzosborn was a rich mine, from whence Caroline drew the most valuable ore. The seclusion from the world in which he had almost wholly lived, if it had contracted his knowledge in some respects, had given an originality of character to all that he did know, which more than compensated for his

ignorance in those particulars, that had not fallen under his observation. His agricultural and gardening pursuits had made him familiarly conversant with the wonders of creation; and as he conversed with Caroline on the physiology of a tulip root, or the provisions of Providence in the mechanism of a flower, there was opened to her a source of research at once new and enchanting.

If Caroline were delighted with the information that her uncle could communicate, he was no less charmed with the docility and acuteness of Caroline; nor had she less reason to be pleased with the moral character of Mr. Fitzosborn, than with his intellectual acquirements.

Living in a constant exercise of benevolence, administering strict justice, and keeping a watchful eye over the motive for his actions, he approached perhaps as nearly to perfection as human nature admits of.

That he had his prejudices, his prepossessions, and his frailties, who, that ever

attended to the operations of his own mind, can doubt?

Some of these prejudices, prepossessions, and vanities, had been heightened by the solitary life which he had led, and by the ill conduct and ingratitude of some of his nearest connexions, and still more by the dormant state in which, with little exception, the affections of his heart had remained, even to the hour in which he first saw Caroline.

The sight of her had given the Promethean touch, which had kindled into life all the qualities of his soul.

Her person and countenance had realized his ideas of a celestial being; the humility of her mind, the sweetness of her temper, her moderation and disinterestedness, had furnished an image of human excellence that he had never before believed possible.

From her first visit to Henhurst it had only been by a strong effort of self-command that he had conquered the earnest desire that he had felt to appropriate her wholly to himself, and to debase her to

the world the heiress of all his possessions; but if he had yielded the latter desire to what he believed he owed himself, he had equally sacrificed the former to a sense of the superior claims that others had upon her, and to the consideration how little attraction there could be to a young woman just entering into life in the society of an old man just going out of it. He had, however, to the best of his power, kept a strict eye over her during her residence with Lord Enville and her father; and this power was much greater than it was supposed to be by those who knew nothing of Mr. Fitzosborn except his oddities. Although he apparently had lived so long apart from the world, he was not wholly without connexions amongst those who still moved within its circles. Amongst these connexions was an old and intimate acquaintance, who continued to correspond regularly with him, and who furnished him with information on such subjects as interested his curiosity. He had selected him for this office partly on ac-

count of his good qualities, but not entirely without some reference to others of a more questionable tendency. It was the intention of Mr. Fitzosborn to bequeath his property to such of his relations as he believed would most worthily enjoy it : but as he was aware that his idea of worth did not exactly square with the one which in general was entertained, he felt a difficulty in attaining a true knowledge of the characters with which he wished to become acquainted. He thought he had to guard equally against that affected tolerance which offers an excuse for every fault and every folly, and that splenetic humour which can see nothing good. He was alike to beware of the good humour that would stoop to falsehood to secure an heirship to a favourite, and that vanity which aspires to the praise of singular sagacity by discerning faults invisible to every other eye. He also knew that half the splendid qualities which dazzle the world classed with him as vices, and that the virtues which

he most prized were too often considered as shades in the character. He therefore wished his informant to be one who would rather represent things as they actually appeared to him, even if his opinion of their moral quality differed from his own, than one whose more tender feelings might lead him, from a just sense of the turpitude of the action, to soften the features of it. It was for this reason that, with reference to the conduct of those to whom he was looking as his possible heirs, he had preferred the intelligence of Mr. Beauchamp to that of any other person. He knew that while no consideration would prevail with him to falsify his information, that his notions of right and wrong were in some cases so distinct from his own, that he would probably obtain knowledge of the very failing which he wished most to keep clear of at the very time that his friend intended to recommend the claimant to his favour, and that from his very censures he might discover the excellence he sought for.

The circumstance of Caroline having

taken up; her abode with the Envilles had drawn that family within the circle of his scrutiny; and he was very accurately acquainted by his faithful informer of the character of each individual that composed it. Mr. Pynsynt had been too justly delineated to allow for a moment of his thinking with patience of his becoming the husband of Caroline, but he was slow to believe that she could entertain such a design; and it was not until he learnt with certainty the refusal given by her father to Mr. Beaumont, and the reason assigned for this refusal, that he could be induced to credit a report so much to her disadvantage. Mr. Beaumont was the son of Mr. Fitzosborn's earliest friend, the person whom, till he had known Caroline, he had best loved upon earth; and he had followed him with his eye from the dawning light of his school-days to his now full meridian of well-deserved reputation. Mr. Beaumont was in habits of intimacy with Mr. Fitzosborn's friend, and had detailed to him his passion for Caroline and its issue. No sooner was Mr. Fitzosborn

informed of these particulars, which left him no option in his belief of what he regarded as the depravity of Caroline, than his first impulse was to send for the ring without any alternative. But against so rigorous a measure his heart rebelled ; it suggested a thousand excuses for Caroline ; and finally it decided, as an act of justice, to give her an opportunity of vindicating herself. The result has been seen ; and from the moment that he knew her innocent, and believed her injured, he had given way without restraint to his predilection in her favour ; nor had he hesitated a moment to withdraw her wholly from the influence of a parent whom he considered as one of the most degraded of the human kind.

CHAP. II.

THE uncle and the niece, equally delighted with each other, often found the days too short for the variety of occupation which each hour brought with it. The domestic economy of Henhurst was conducted with the most exact regularity; the meals were served as the clock struck the hour at which they were appointed to appear: the table was spread with a profusion which, if, according to the modern idea, it excluded elegance, fully answered the ancient notion of magnificence. The cookery was equally apart from the refinement of luxury and the roughness of rusticity. All was excellent in its kind, but all was substantial; and having been but little diminished by the regulated and moderate appetites of Mr. Fitzosborn and Caroline, furnished many wholesome and invigorating meals for the poor. Mr. Fitzosborn was an early riser, and he was

delighted to find that Caroline was so too: he considered early hours as a guarantee for half a score of the moral virtues. As the clock struck eight the whole family assembled in the chapel to morning service. Breakfast was served at nine, dinner at four, coffee at seven; and a slight supper at nine; at ten the family again met at prayers, and at eleven all was silence and repose.

Amongst Mr. Fitzosborn's peculiarities was the aversion which he entertained against a minister of the church residing in his house. A sincere lover of religion, he abhorred all that he esteemed priestcraft; of all profanation he held it to be the worst. He knew the influence that religion has over the human mind, and was too tenacious of his own authority to trust such a power in the hands of any subordinate member of his family. "In a Protestant country," would he say, "with the Bible in their hand, and a weekly exposition of the duties that it inculcates, no one can wander from the right way through ignorance:

there are few men (would he add) whose conduct will bear the scrutiny of an every day's observation. The frailties, or even the awkwardnesses (supposing him free from vice) of a domestic chaplain, may do more injury to the cause of religion than can be counterbalanced by his precepts and reproof.—Besides, how difficult is it for such an one to maintain his dignity without pride, or his humility without meanness!—Nor dare I trust *myself*. I should choose to be treated with respect and deference; and can I tell that I should be *apt* to mark the line of separation between respect and servility? Should I not too easily forget the superiority that the ministration of the holy offices, and perhaps the virtues of the man, should give, in the inferiority of the station of him who exercised them?—I will have no domestic chaplain; I will myself be the instructor of my family, and the judge of their moral conduct: there shall be no intermediate person between them and me.”

In consequence of such opinions and such conclusions, the service both of the morning and the evening had been read by Mr. Fitzosborn himself. But when he had become acquainted with the mellifluous tones of Caroline, and had heard the propriety and effect with which she read aloud, he delegated to her a great part of this duty, only reserving to himself such portions of it where exposition and reproof had a greater share than devotion and entreaty. Nor indeed could there be a more interesting or affecting sight than to behold the venerable old man, with Caroline, arrayed in all the charms of youth and beauty, by his side, by turns explaining the duties of the Christian religion, and persuading to the performance of them by "the terrors of the Lord," or hymning the praises of their Creator, extolling his goodness to his creatures, and joining in devout supplication to that Being, without whose permission not "a sparrow falls to the ground." Caroline thought that she had never before felt the delights of religion;

the hour that was spent in the chapel gave an elevation to her spirit and her feeling, that accompanied her through the day; and on retiring at night from the same sacred spot to her own apartment, she felt the world, its cares, its chagrins, its pleasures, and its temptations, to fade from her mind, and God and Heaven alone to possess her thoughts.

Although if Mr. Fitzosborn had alone consulted his own inclination he would scarcely have had Caroline a moment from his sight, yet he was so afraid of importuning her, that he restricted his gratification to certain hours, making it a principle that she had a given portion of every day wholly at her own disposal; but as she was herself never so happy as when by the side of her uncle, she contended that she had a right to bestow upon him as much of this time as she pleased, in addition to that which he claimed as his due: a right which Mr. Fitzosborn was very ready to allow.

By the means of the old housekeeper,

Caroline was soon introduced to all the poor in the neighbourhood; these became the objects of her daily care, as they were already of her uncle's munificence. To him she would repeat all that occurred in these visits; and would often lead him from cottage to cottage; as they drove out together in the little park chair, now enlarged to admit of two persons. When the weather was fine, gardening and the farm fully occupied them; while the days that they were obliged to pass in the house flew swiftly away in various reading, in some music, and a few games of chess or backgammon. Sometimes, though very rarely, a neighbouring gentleman would make his appearance at dinner; but the visit was always short, and seemed in no way to contribute to the pleasures of Mr. Fitzosborn; nor had Caroline, at the end of three months' residence at Henhurst, become known beyond such accidental visits to any individual except the persons of whom the household was composed. At the parish church, where she

regularly attended twice every Sunday with her uncle, she saw all the neighbouring families, with whom Mr. Fitzosborn exchanged all common civilities, but he did not introduce her to any one; and she saw that she was regarded both with wonder and pity. Perhaps envy also had its place in the breast of some, for no one now doubted but that the heir of Henhurst was declared, and that this heir was Caroline.

A knowledge of her uncle's real character had proved to her how ill-founded was the notion that he could be imposed upon by the artifices of any one; or that he could be the dupe of his servants. She saw with what more than common acuteness he looked through the action to the motive; and she beheld him so jealous of his domestic authority; that the slightest intimation of his will was not to be disregarded with impunity, by any individual of which his numerous family was composed, from the maître d'hôtel to the lowest menial. Partial as she could not but see that he was to all

she said or did, she was aware that his favour hung entirely on his opinion of her merit; and that if she were to lose the hold which this opinion gave her over him, he could "whistle her off, and let her down the wind a prey to fortune."—While she respected him the more, she did not love him the less for this firmness of character; but it must be acknowledged that it made her sometimes turn her eye towards her ring with a feeling of anxiety, and reiterate her vows that it should never depart from her finger.

CHAP. III.

WHILE Caroline continued thus happy and thus watchful over herself at Henhurst, she had little communication with her connexions in town. From her father she heard seldom: his letters contained nothing beyond the news of the day, or an exhortation that she would take care to secure the favours of her uncle. Lady Enville had written only once, and Edward never. Of this young man Mr. Fitzosborn seldom spoke. Sometimes, when Caroline tried to introduce his name with advantage, he would say, "I hear nothing amiss of him"—"he will probably make a good lawyer"—"he promises well"—"we shall see"—and such like phrases; but he never mentioned him of his own accord, or seemed to remember that there existed such persons as his mother and sisters. On their claims upon him he had made

up his mind, and believed that there was nothing more to be done. As Caroline had the satisfaction of knowing that their wants had been supplied by another hand, she thought it wise not to recall them to her uncle's notice; but she omitted no opportunity of placing the virtues of Edward before his eyes, till she was effectually silenced; when upon her having been unusually eloquent upon the subject, she saw her uncle fix his eye upon her with a penetrating look, and heard him say, as he turned from her, "It is not the judgment of a young lady of nineteen that will decide with me the merit of a young man!"

The autumn was now far advanced, and the period for the half-yearly payment to Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn being come, Caroline wrote to her banker for the necessary means with which to make the remittance. What was her surprise and horror on being told, in answer to her letter, that the whole of her property was sold out of the stocks more than two months before; and that fifty pounds

were the whole of what remained due to her in her banker's hands.

As Caroline believed that the paper which she had signed before she left town had not given her father a power over her property beyond the amount of two thousand pounds, she endeavoured, on a little recollection, to persuade herself that there was some mistake in the matter, which her father would clear up. To him she wrote for information on the subject, and strove to await it with composure, and without suspicion. It was couched in the following terms.

“ DEAR CAROLINE,

“ The multiplicity of my engagements has prevented my communicating to you a circumstance that I am ready to acknowledge you ought to have been acquainted with earlier, and which if you had known would have prevented your application to Hoare—an application which I am sorry has been made. On entering farther into the affair which I mentioned to you before

you left town, I found that the advantage would be more than doubled in proportion to the money advanced: I therefore did not scruple to make use of the power that you had given me over the *whole of your property in the stocks*, and to act as I saw best for your interest and my own. I am hitherto well satisfied with what I have done, though at present no return can be expected. On your removal to Henhurst I was persuaded that you would have no use for any part of your income; and that if you had, the interest of the two thousand pounds which you had so prudently secured on mortgage, and the rent of your Somersetshire box, would supply all deficiencies in your uncle's bounty. Being assured, as I say, that you could not yourself want money, and really wanting it myself extremely, I am to account to you for the whole sum of—we will say, for the sake of round numbers—twenty thousand pounds, which I do as under. Instead of the two thousand pounds which we talked of when together, you

must place ten thousand pounds under the head of the speculation I spoke of. As the interest of this sum made no part of your income, the present alienation of it is merely an inconvenience to me; but, as it was necessary that the defalcation which such an alienation made in my income should in some way be supplied, I have appropriated the other ten thousand pounds to setting free some parts of my property, of which the income was swallowed up by interest of money, and I thus remain your debtor for the whole. I shall be extremely sorry, if any miscalculation of mine, as to the generosity of my brother, occasions you any personal difficulty; but this I can hardly suppose: and as to the three hundred pounds per annum which you had in so extraordinary a manner appropriated to the supplying the wants of relations whom you have never seen, I am persuaded that both your good sense (nobody has more, Caroline) and your affections will show you that it answers the purpose of your benevolence

much better by being applied to the relief of a parent's necessities. Indeed the claim that the one has upon you is so legitimate, and the other so fanciful, that they will not admit of a comparison. If the interest of the two thousand pounds, or the rent of your Somersetshire house, is not at present due, I shall be happy to furnish you with fifty pounds for your present occasions, and it may be carried to account.

"I hope this explanation will prove satisfactory; and I beg that you will not suffer any inconvenience that I can relieve,

"Being, dear Caroline, very sincerely,

"Your affectionate father,

"AUGUSTUS FITZOSBORN.

"P. S. On recollection, I believe there is still a small balance in your favour in Hoare's hands, which I conclude will make every thing easy."

Although Caroline had but too much reason to know that extravagance is the parent of avarice, she had no adequate

idea, till this moment, of the magnitude that she could communicate to her offspring. She remained silent and thunderstruck at this proof, that less than the whole of her property could not satisfy the rapacity of her father; and her own ruin affected her less than did his depravity. She could scarcely believe that he was himself aware of the extent of his cupidity and injustice. As she read his letter, it seemed more the simple, though not very intelligible, statement of an account than the notification of a robbery. She thought it impossible that he could have mistaken the limit of the power which she had given him over her property; yet how could she entertain the alternative? The conclusion which her uncle had so promptly drawn, on the proof of a much slighter guilt, revolted her whole soul. "It cannot be!" said she. "If my father unhappily have not that strictness of principle which religion alone can give, he is at least a gentleman and a man of honour!—

Would he have allowed me to sign a paper, the conditions of which he knew were different from those to which I had given my consent? Would he do this for the express purpose of robbing me? and would he in consequence actually rob me? Oh, no! — there must be some error, some misconception. — No gentleman, no man of honour —” She stopt: for she felt that the words she was uttering had no meaning when unsupported by religion. “Yet,” thought she again, “how unconscious does he appear of an intention to injure me! Can the words which he uses be meant to designate the actions which he confesses? It is impossible!” Alas, Caroline knew not how completely it was possible to confound all notions of the nature of virtue and of vice by the ingenious science of calling things by wrong names.

So wholly was the mind of Caroline occupied by what she felt to be the villainy of her father, though her heart refused to acknowledge what her reason could not disavow, that she was some

time before she adverted to the impossibility there now was of her keeping her engagements with Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn: when it forced itself upon her notice, she felt a pang that was scarcely exceeded by what she suffered on her father's account. She was aware that Mrs. Fitzosborn, depending upon the promised supply, would probably have contracted debts which she would now have no means to defray. She thought she saw her in a gaol, to which she had herself conducted her; and the agony of her feeling exceeded all expression. To whom could she apply for assistance or advice? To open her heart to her uncle was impossible — she could have died rather than so to have exposed a parent; nor was she sure that even at that expense she could have relieved the Fitzosborns. They had lost nothing of what her uncle had thought sufficient for their support; and her officious interference to add to their comforts was more likely to draw down his displeasure upon herself, than the disappointment of her be-

nevolent purposes to induce him farther to assist them. Yet something must be done, and done immediately. The idea that Mrs. Fitzosborn was now looking to every post for means to purchase provisions for the day, and that no such means would ever arrive, was insupportable to her. What should she do?—Her thoughts turned towards Edward. He was already privy to her transactions with Mrs. Fitzosborn; and were she not now to communicate to him the change that had taken place, she was aware that he would ultimately become acquainted with it from his mother. She felt an invincible repugnance to addressing so mortifying a confession to a stranger, as that which she had to make. She was sensible that she had a claim to the indulgence and favourable thoughts of Edward, even when appearances were so much against her. He too could best excuse her to Mrs. Fitzosborn; to him therefore she resolved to write, and she did so as follows.

“ May I, without putting your friend-

ship and your candour to too severe a test, request you to believe that it is not by my fault that I am no longer able to fulfil the promise that I made to your mother?—nor do I know that I shall ever again be able. It is useless to speak of sorrow or regret. All that I can do to obviate the inconvenience and disappointment so unexpectedly incurred I will do. I enclose a draft on my banker for fifty pounds, and a bank note for twenty; which sums I will be much obliged to you to transmit to Mrs. Fitzosborn, with an assurance, and I make it confidently, because the fulfilling of it depends upon myself alone, that she shall have fifty pounds more in two months time. I hope these sums will be sufficient to prevent Mrs. Fitzosborn from suffering any immediate inconvenience from my having falsified my word. I am sure she has too much Christian charity to believe that I do so willingly. For the future I can only promise an annuity of fifty pounds; but I do promise this for as long as the

time, whatever it may be, that I shall remain under the roof of my uncle ; and in every circumstance, to the extent of my power, the supply of Mrs. Fitzosborn's wants shall have the precedency of my own. I know you will think this all very strange ; but do not too curiously inquire why such things are. If you *can*, let me still retain your good opinion, and, in all events,

“ Believe me very sincerely yours,
 “ CAROLINE FITZOSBORN.”

Caroline felt somewhat relieved when she had thus provided as far as she could, against the evils which, in her apprehension, threatened Mrs. Fitzosborn. The task of writing to her father still remained. How was she to perform it? Accusation and reproach were alike unseenly and unavailing ; but neither could she counterfeit a satisfaction which she was so far from feeling, or sanction even by her silence a statement which she knew to be false. After many attempts, she wrote as follows :

“ You must pardon me, sir, if I allow myself to express some surprise at the contents of your letter. It is inexplicable to me how the mistake could have arisen which you inform me placed the whole of my property in the stocks at your disposal. That such could not be my intention must be evident from the circumstance not unknown to you, sir, of my having already alienated a part of the income arising from the stock. I apprehend that whether or no I could have disposed of it better is not the question: my word had been given, and I am confident that I should not knowingly have recalled it. A misapprehension then there must have been *somewhere*, and I cannot wholly conceal my chagrin at the consequences that have ensued. The most grievous to me of these consequences is the incapacity to which I am now reduced of fulfilling an engagement into which I entered voluntarily, and the violation of which must involve in accumulated distress those whom I wished to assist. If it were possible for you, sir,

to enter into my feelings on this point, perhaps you would find means to enable me to redeem my pledge. I should acknowledge your doing so as the greatest of obligations. For the supply of my own personal wants I have no request to make; I shall still be able to make my reduced income equal to every wish that centres in self. I owe every thing to my uncle for his kindness, but nothing for his bounty. He believes me rich, and he knows the proper use of money too well to lavish it on one whom he has reason to suppose has already a superfluity. I shall esteem it as a favour if you will give me an early answer to this letter; and I take the liberty earnestly to entreat, that nothing short of an absolute impossibility may prevent you complying with my request in favour of Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn. Forgive me for observing, that it is the only compensation that I ask for the all, of which I have been despoiled.

“I am, sir, your obedient daughter,

“CAROLINE FITZOSBORN.”

Caroline was by no means satisfied with her letter; she thought that it said at once too much and too little: but as she found that no alteration which she could make would remedy this fault, she suffered it to go as it was. As Caroline had little hope either from her father's justice or his feelings, her next care was to provide for the fifty pounds that she had promised Mrs. Fitzosborn, as in part fulfilling the original engagement, and as the reduced assistance that she could now furnish. The twenty pounds which she had enclosed in her letter to Edward had left her almost penniless; and a half year's interest upon the two thousand pounds was not due of two months to come. There were, however, sixty pounds arising from the rent of her house in the hands of her kind trustee, and which she had left there for the purposes of benevolence; nor could she withdraw it without acknowledging, by a change in its destination, a want of money, which she knew, in the eyes of this well-judging man, would be con-

sidered in her supposed circumstances as reprehensible. Here was another sacrifice of character which she had to make; but between the really doing well and the appearing to do so, Caroline could not long hesitate. She had but too frequently and recently felt all the consequences of "calling things by wrong names" to fall into the same error herself. She therefore simply stated, that an unlooked-for circumstance having occasioned her to want more money than she could otherwise command, she requested that he would transmit her the sixty pounds then in his possession. This was the remainder of one hundred pounds, the annual rent of her house; fifty of this sum she henceforth destined yearly to the use of Mrs. Fitzosborn, and the remainder, with the interest of two thousand pounds, was the whole to which her income was now reduced. Caroline knew that she could draw her expenses into a very small compass if it were not for the wages of her servants. Since her residence at Henhurst her

footman was in fact nowise necessary to her ; but she durst not discharge him without explaining to her uncle her motive for doing so, both as she knew that he considered such an appendage in her situation as a proper decorum, and as it might appear, if she parted with the man, that she threw herself wholly on the services of her uncle's domestics. She had, therefore, no option ; all the inconvenience must be taken ; and she could only hope to meet the consequent expense by a still farther abridgement of all personal indulgences. The ample largesses of Mr. Fitzosborn made it easy for her to appear to fulfil all the duties of liberality to the poor, with little cost to herself ; and as she was saved the pain of seeing distress which she could not relieve, she flattered herself that she should, in time, subdue the lesser pain of not being herself the actual reliever,

CHAP. IV.

MR. FITZOSBORN'S absence from home during the whole of one morning had allowed Caroline time to struggle with the first shock that her father's letter had occasioned; to write all the letters necessary in consequence, to form her own arrangement; and, in some degree, to recover her usual evenness of mind and cheerfulness: yet the agitation of the preceding hours had left its traces on her countenance, and when she met her uncle at dinner he immediately inquired if she were ill.

"I am quite well," returned Caroline; "and when I have said that, I know you will be kind enough, my dear sir, to ask me no more questions."

"Are you sure, Caroline," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "that it is wise to have any secrets from me?"

"I am sure," said Caroline, "it is very painful, but I believe it to be necessary."

"Beware what you do," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "where there is mystery there is seldom innocence."

"Yet indeed! and indeed, I am not guilty," said Caroline.

"So I believe," returned her uncle; "but remember, that the first step costs all; and *that* first step is but too often concealment."

Caroline returned no answer, but felt an added weight upon her spirits. The evening passed with less satisfaction both to the uncle and niece than any that they had yet spent together; and when Caroline came to perform her part in the devotions of the night, her voice was so tremulous as to render her accents scarcely articulate. Her tones grew stronger as she proceeded; and as she concluded the hour of prayer with a hymn of praise for past mercies, and expressive of confidence in future support, her voice became angelic, and her coun-

tenance glowed with the effulgence of religious hope and joy. Mr. Fitzosborn looked on her with surprise, and, as he bade her good night, pressed her tenderly to his heart, and cried, "Thou art a most extraordinary creature, child! Thou durst not surely appeal to thy Creator for the furtherance of designs that thou darest not confide to thy sinful fellow-mortal!"

"Alas, my uncle," said Caroline, "I have no designs but humbly to do my duty, nor a wish but that I may not be misunderstood!"

Caroline had so far mastered her feelings and regulated her mind in the course of a sleepless night, as to be able to appear at breakfast with her usual alacrity and cheerfulness; but there still hung a shade upon Mr. Fitzosborn's brow. Still the tenderness with which he addressed Caroline, the gentleness with which he delivered his opinions, seemed to speak rather compassion than disapprobation, or doubt. Caroline, having taken her part, was "herself again;" and

in a day or two there were no traces of that disturbance which had a little ruffled the serenity of Henhurst.

As Caroline felt that she had nothing to hope for from her father, so she attended his answer to her letter without impatience, and experienced no disappointment when successive post days brought her nothing from him. A fortnight had elapsed before she received a line: at length she, one morning, found amongst her letters the following one from her father:—

"I have really been so hurried, my dear Caroline, for some time past, that I have not had a moment at command, otherwise I should have answered your letter sooner. You take the whole matter in a wrong light; and, I see, do not understand a tittle of business: but all goes on well, and a little time will convince you that I have acted wisely and kindly. I am very glad to find that you have no personal wants; I should even be glad to gratify you in all your

benevolent whims, could it be, but at present it is quite out of the question. I am sorry for Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn; but in such times as these, every body must come in for their share of inconvenience. However, I have sent down some gowns for the girls, and some little adornments for herself. I hope these things will be liked; they are well chosen, and, as *les connoisseurs* assure me, of the newest fashion. I know this will give you pleasure, which was my chief motive for this little attention, being very sincerely,

"My dear Caroline,

"Your affectionate father,

"Augustus Fitzosborn."

Caroline sighed as she read this letter, and endeavoured to escape from the conclusions that her understanding, in spite of her heart, drew from it. But if thus mortifying had been the result of her communication with her father, very different had been the issue of her application to Edward. She had scarcely

calculated upon an answer from him when his letter arrived. These were the contents.

"I know not, my dear cousin, in what words to express the emotions which your letter has occasioned; or rather, I know not how to conceal what I must not speak. Believe you! believe that it is not your fault that you do not keep your promise to my mother! And is this so wonderful a test of my friendship and my candour? Oh! where is the power able to persuade me of the falsehood of *that* which you assert for truth?—of that which I must have believed against the testimony of the whole world, except yourself?—Do not, you say, inquire too anxiously why such things are. Impossible, Caroline! impossible! I must inquire, I must know! Forgive me, oh, my cousin!—I would not be presumptuous—I would not be oppressive; but can I suffer you to shut up in your own pure breast this disgraceful secret? (for disgrace attaches some

where,) and leave you to struggle alone with all the heart-rending reflections that it must give rise to? By our relationship,—by the good opinion which I have sometimes flattered myself that you entertain of me,—I conjure you to honour me with your confidence. Let not an unavailing tenderness for another, deprive me of a privilege of which I am not wholly unworthy, and which is dearer to my heart than all that all the congregated monarchs of the earth could bestow. My suspicions have already but one object, your silence will but the more confirm them: the mischief appears to be extensive; you, I see, believe it to be hopeless, but this may not be the case; remedies, or at least mitigations, may be found: you must not, indeed you must not, take this burthen upon yourself without one effort to lighten it. Do not be afraid, my dearest cousin, to open the whole bad story to me. I will not stir a finger without your consent; I will counsel no harsh measures; I will have every considera-

tion that your delicacy, might I not in this instance say *filial* delicacy? can require. But I must not suffer you to be pillaged unresistingly; I must not suffer the best of human intellects to be the dupe of the best of human hearts. Write to me, my dearest cousin; remember that family honour is with you and me the same, and be not afraid to tell me all that has been done; and we will then see what can be done. I have obeyed your direction with respect to my mother, because I know that here can lie no appeal from your will, and because I know how much more keenly you feel the deprivations of others than you do your own. For the same reason I will mention, that a little successful industry has been able to supply the efforts of baffled benevolence; so do not fear that my mother will any ways suffer from your disappointment. Perhaps I ought to entreat your forgiveness for the liberty I have taken, and the warmth with which I have written; and if either should offend you, I shall be most sin-

cerely grieved, yet should I scarcely even then know how to repent having yielded to an impulse which I should have found it so difficult to have resisted. My dearest cousin, farewell! Angels, only more pure and more spiritualized than yourself, protect and bless you!"

The tumult of mind into which Caroline was thrown by the perusal of this letter at once astonished and alarmed her; she felt how little she was advanced in the task which she had imposed upon herself of confining her regards for Edward within the bounds of friendship. As she read his animated praise, his ardent desire to serve her, it seemed that such delight was happily purchased by the loss of the whole of her fortune, and she forgot for a moment that her father's integrity and her own property had been wrecked together. Returning from the delirium of bliss that the first perusal of Edward's letter had occasioned, she again read it, and found ground for more sober feelings.

"Compassion," said she; "his own high sense of rectitude; his impatience under the feelings of injuries done to others; may they not fully account for all that I have been so ready to impute to another cause? He speaks to me as a friend, as an adviser, as a relation. 'We feel for the *same* family honour,' says he; would he have ventured to have spoken so peremptorily had he been a lover?"

She blushed as the last thought passed through her mind. "Foolish Caroline!" said she, "wouldest thou separate the character of a lover from that of a friend? —and is it not the part of a friend to forget forms in substances?"

"What is it," added she, "that I wish? Would I indeed desire that the happiness of Edward should depend upon an union which my poverty has now put out of all question?" The reflexions that followed this thought soon stilled the effervescence of joy, and gave Caroline sufficient calmness to reply to Edward's letter with all the decorum that

she could desire. Her decorum, however, was untinged by subterfuge, unchilled by affected indifference: it was the decorum of a delicate mind, not the disguise of spider-like coquetry. Thus she wrote.

“ I hope I am not so undistinguishing as to mistake the warmth of a generous friendship for the impertinence of curiosity. I sincerely believe that it is for my sake alone that you wish thus to pry into what I would willingly conceal. Concealment, however, as far as the purpose for which I can alone wish it, seems with you to be impossible: as much so, as, I am persuaded, my confidence would be unavailing to the end which you so kindly seek. Your sagacity is not mistaken as to the source from whence my difficulties spring; and having said this, I am sure you will spare me the pain of saying more. Your advice, could I have had it, might have prevented the evil; it is beyond your power to remedy it.—I will have no

umpire between a parent and myself. All that I can now wish is, that the transaction may remain a secret from the whole world; and I will so far tax your friendship as to require from you the most sacred silence, not only as to any supposed fact, but as to every circumstance that can point suspicion to the truth. I am now sheltered from all observation; I shall soon be, if I am not already, forgotten by what we choose to call '*the world*;' it will not, therefore, be difficult to draw an impenetrable veil over what has passed. In my situation you know that I can have no personal wants; and the change that has taken place in my circumstances would not cost me a sigh if I had not so intemperately, as I am now inclined to think, involved poor Mrs. Fitzosborn in my disappointment. Lest your conjectures should go beyond the truth, I will tell you that I still retain possession of two thousand pounds and my house in Somersetshire; so that I am, as to myself, still sufficiently affluent; still able, while I con-

tinue with my uncle, to do the little that I have promised for your mother. May the industry, which I pray to God to bless, supply my deficiencies! Earnestly as I wish to retain the good opinion of Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn, I must *require* that your eagerness to acquit me of blame does not lead you to exculpate me at the expense of another. I will trust my reputation to that Being who has enabled me, as I humbly hope, to do my duty; and do not you, by your zeal in my favour, betray that you think my confidence ill-founded. For the rest, it is but as if it had never been: let us think of it no more; but let us think a great deal of that which will never pass away—of *that* which will even outlive the affectionate and grateful regard with which I am sincerely yours,

“ C. F.”

To this letter Caroline received the following answer.

“ I acquiesce, my dear, my wonder-

ful cousin. It is all that I can, all that I dare trust myself to say: were I to say more I might perhaps offend you, or wrong others."

CHAP. V.

CAROLINE, with a new spring of joy in her heart, which she knew not how wholly to account for to herself, now fully resumed her former occupations; and pursued them with a spirit and satisfaction that delighted her uncle. The evenings now began to lengthen; and books and back-gammon were resorted to, rather than drives in the park, or walks in the grounds. A regular course of reading was begun, and Caroline already anticipated the store of knowledge that the winter would enable her to accumulate: but other thoughts troubled the mind of Mr. Fitzosborn. The uneasiness that Caroline had avowed on occasion of her father's conduct, Mr. Fitzosborn had connected in his own mind with the cause of her refusal of Mr. Beaumont: this cause he entertained no doubt was her preference to some other person; a preference which, if not

strictly unworthy, he concluded to be indiscreet. In the discomposure that he had witnessed in Caroline, he thought that he saw the crisis of this preference; while the cheerfulness and renewed enjoyment which she had lately manifested, evinced that the struggle was past.

The favourite wish of Mr. Fitzosborn was to see Caroline the wife of Mr. Beaumont; but the strict watch which he kept over his thoughts taught him to distrust the motive for this wish. He apprehended that he might mistake an indulgence of self-will for an earnest desire to secure Caroline's happiness. That a marriage with Mr. Beaumont would secure her happiness, and, what was of still higher price in his estimation, her principles and integrity, he did not entertain a doubt. Marriage he looked upon as the touchstone of all female virtues; and that as an unworthy choice too surely proved, in general, the shipwreck of all that is excellent in woman, so he regarded a connexion with a man of religious principle and sound under-

standing as a harbour of safety. But he would not conduct Caroline even into this harbour against her will; and while the suspicion remained of her preference to another, he had been able to suppress, though he could not wholly conquer, his desire to recommend Mr. Beaumont to her favour. The happy moment, however, he believed to be now arrived, in which, without wounding her feelings, he could gratify his own; and having observed for several weeks past an uninterrupted serenity of mind in Caroline, he resolved to bring the matter to an issue.

“Caroline,” said he to her one evening, as she closed the book for the night, “I am thinking of some means to enliven these winter hours to you. So unvaried a life, I fear, will weary you.”

“It is a vain fear, my dear sir,” replied Caroline, with a smile; “I never found time so short as since my residence at Henhurst.”

“But, child, if you live wholly with

an old man you will soon be unfit company for any body else."

"I flatter myself," replied Caroline, "that you will let me always live with you."

"*Always*, child!—do you consider what you say?"

"I certainly meant," said Caroline, abashed, "to use the word only in the sense that a mortal *can* use it."

"Yet even then," said her uncle, "it was not the proper word: you meant to say that you wish to remain with me while I live."

"Or while *I* live," said Caroline, with emotion.

"We need not advert to so threadbare a topic as the uncertainty of human life," said Mr. Fitzosborn. "We all know that there is no dependence upon survivorship; but in the common course of things *that* must be your lot between you and me, and to this we must look. And do you think it would be fair, Caroline, so to spoil you while I live, that

nobody will have any thing to do with you after I am dead?"

"Why, dear sir, why must we think of such a period?"

"Because we ought to think of every thing that may happen. No weakness, Caroline — but I had little intention of making either of us serious. I was merely going to ask you if you should object to an addition to our tête-à-tête?"

"Object! my dear uncle; how is it possible that I should object to any one whom you wish to see?"

"Because you *have* seen the person I mean before; and because you have once been so foolish as to think that you could see too much of him."

"I will not affect to misunderstand you, sir," said Caroline. "If it is Mr. Beaumont that you mean, although I will not deny but that I had rather he did not come here, yet if he come *wholly* as your guest, I can certainly have no objection to doing my part towards entertaining him."

"And pray," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "does your exclusive *wholly* refer to what has past, or to any fear of what may be to come?"

"To *both*," returned Caroline: "my mind remains unchanged."

"In *all* particulars?" said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"In *all* particulars," returned Caroline, colouring.

"Caroline," said Mr. Fitzosborn earnestly, "I can no longer bear this mystery. When first I received you into my house I was unknown to you; reserve on your part was then allowable; but, except your knowledge of my character has led you to think me unworthy of your confidence, I have now a right to it, and as the guardian of your virtue I require it."

Caroline trembled, and turned pale; her lips quivered, and her voice faltered.

"What am I to understand by such emotion?" said her uncle; "can the

simple disapproval of Mr. Beaumont cause it? No, it springs from a different feeling; you love another."

"Spare me, my dearest uncle; oh, spare me!" cried Caroline, in a voice of agony.

"I will spare you," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "but you must also spare yourself; you must tear from your heart that worthless being who, having gained so rich a jewel, has not courage to come forward to claim it."

"There is no such being," cried Caroline with energy. Oh, my uncle! you demand and deserve my confidence. Away with false shame! I confess my heart was *given*, not *won*."

Mr. Fitzosborn, confounded with an avowal so little expected, was silent for a few moments; while Caroline, covered with intolerable confusion, durst not cast even a momentary glance towards him.

After a moment's pause, "It can only be on *kindred* excellence," said Mr.

Fitzosborn affectionately, "that my Caroline has conferred so rich a gift. You love Edward."

Caroline was silent: the moment of enthusiasm was past, and she remained confounded and abashed.

"In a passion so founded," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "virtue has nothing to reprove. I have long had my eye on Edward; I know how highly he ranks in the estimation of all whose judgment has any value. But what says prudence to the matter? Will she allow that you shall bestow your thousands on a man who has nothing but his industry to give in return?"

"I entreat you, sir," said Caroline, in an agony of feeling that she had never known before; "I entreat you, sir, let us not discuss this matter any farther. It is no calculation of prudence—Edward—I—indeed, indeed this cannot be thought of."

"You would say," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, "that Edward never sought

you, and you draw the conclusion that he did not wish to seek you; but so do not I. Had Edward endeavoured to win your heart, he had been unworthy of it. Would you have him such a coxcomb as to believe that his personal merit is a counterpoise to yours, and your money into the bargain?"

"Edward is free from all such self-confidence," said Caroline: "be assured, my uncle, that Edward thinks not of me."

"I will be assured of that from his own mouth," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "before I will believe it. Caroline, I must have you married. Perhaps my wishes did not lead me to choose Edward for your husband, and for this I may have my reasons, perhaps whimsical ones, perhaps good ones; but all ought and shall give way to so decided a preference as that which you have avowed. Religiously and morally speaking, Edward is worthy of you—I take it upon myself to bestow you upon him: yet search well your heart, and be assured that no

vanity, no ambition, no predilection for the good things of this world lurks there, which will burst forth when this passion of love has burnt itself out. *Now* you may lawfully choose between a greater and a less splendid establishment; but your choice once made, all hankering after the flesh pots of Egypt will be vice. Can you be contented with the modest appointment befitting the wife of a man who must labour for his daily bread, and who ought to be ashamed to spend money faster than her husband gets it?"

Mr. Fitzosborn might have spoken for ever. Caroline was unable to interrupt him. She could have endured the torture of the rack with less anguish than his words inflicted. He looked on her amazed. "Caroline, what now? Speak!—How?—what?—what is the nature of the moral contest that so shakes your frame?"

Clasping her hands, and falling upon her knees—"No more, my uncle—no more, I beseech you!" said she: "no

more, if you would not kill me on the spot. I cannot marry Edward. I would not that you should offer my hand to him for a thousand worlds !”

“What am I to think of this unbecoming, this unusual violence?” said Mr. Fitzosborn. “What is it that you know of Edward or yourself that can justify it?”

“Oh, question me no farther, I conjure you,” said Caroline, with increasing agony: “I have told all I can tell; all I dare to tell—I *cannot* be Edward’s wife: yet he is all excellence; no fault attaches to him; but I cannot, I cannot be his wife!”

“Nor the wife of any other man then,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, solemnly: “you do not mean it?”

“No;” returned Caroline firmly; “my hopes, my wishes, are bounded in being allowed to pass my life with you, and the being able to retain your esteem.”

“I will tell you plainly,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “that this conversation has

shaken the foundation on which it rested. Withdraw to your own room — compose your spirits — let us both forget, if it be possible, what has past.”

CHAP. VI.

CAROLINE withdrew from the presence of her uncle humiliated, and half heart-broken. "Oh, cruel father!" almost broke from her lips, before she had sufficient command over herself to check the exclamation, or to turn her thoughts from her earthly to her heavenly Parent. But the aberration was momentary. "I have retained my integrity — I have performed my duty — the secret, just bursting from my lips, did not escape me," said she. "I will not repine: no, bankrupt as I am in fortune, in love, in the good opinion of him whose praise was most pleasant to my soul, I will not repine. Time with me shall not outweigh eternity!"

Caroline, as she said these words, wiped with her trembling hand the tear from her eyes. She addressed herself, with all the fervency of undoubting con-

fidence, to the Vindicator of innocence. Her mind became calm—she retired to bed, and sunk, ere long, into a sweet and refreshing sleep. She rose not, however, in the morning, with that lightness of spirit which the certainty of meeting the countenance of a partial friend is so fitted to bestow. “I have lost his esteem for ever!” said she; “yet never did I deserve it more than at this moment—let me show him by my cheerfulness that I am free from self-reproach. He will not suspect me of studied deceit; when he sees that I esteem myself, perhaps he may again esteem me.”

She spent some time alone, thus endeavouring to arouse that sense of self-approbation to which she had so just a right: yet when she appeared before her uncle her eye sunk under his, as if with a criminal consciousness; and to the coldness of his morning salutation she could only answer with her tears. As soon as breakfast was over Mr. Fitzosborn retired to his library, without, as it was customary with him to do, ar-

ranging with her the hours that they were to spend together; or the manner in which they were to be occupied. They met not again till the hour of dinner. The meal passed in unbroken silence; and when they adjourned to the drawing-room, Mr. Fitzosborn took up a book, and read to himself. Caroline was in agonies; yet was she resolved, if possible, not to desert herself.

"Shall I not have the pleasure of reading to you to-night, sir?" said she, in a broken voice.

"You are not able to read aloud," said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"Indeed I am," said Caroline, speaking with more steadiness; "and if ever my services were acceptable to you, I am not unworthy that they should be so now."

Mr. Fitzosborn looked at her — "We will, however, have no reading to-night," said he.

"Let me play to you, sir;" said Caroline.

"My mind is not in tune," said her uncle.

"Shall we look over these drawings together?" said Caroline.

"I cannot see them by candle-light," said Mr. Fitzosborn.

Caroline snuffed the candles, and placed two more upon the table, and opened the book of drawings — "If it will not hurt your eyes, sir," she said, "be so kind as to explain this gem to me."

Mr. Fitzosborn felt obliged to comply; and Caroline had the art to engage his attention from drawing to drawing till he began to relax his brow, and to change his monosyllables into conversation. Yet it was evident that "the domestic deity" was not at home, nor the heart alive to kindness. Cold and absent, his words came slowly from his lips; moral maxims or sarcastic observations composed the whole of his discourse: and after an evening of painful effort on the part of Caroline, and repulsive austerity on the part of her uncle, they parted, with little inclination to rest in either; yet was the con-

sciousness of having lost the favour of her best earthly friend less painful to Caroline than her supposed dereliction of virtue was to Mr. Fitzosborn. Supported by the sense of rectitude, her breast swelling with the consciousness of having sacrificed all considerations of self to a principle of duty, Caroline was not, amidst all the gloom of imputed turpitude, without her moments of illumination, while all was blank and dark in the mind of Mr. Fitzosborn.

Over Caroline's supposed deviation from the path of rectitude he mourned as over a fallen angel. In vain he wearied his mind to discover some clew to her conduct that did not terminate in offence. The mystery that attended an acknowledged uneasiness; the avowal of love for a man whom she yet so strenuously refused to marry; her willing seclusion from the world; and the evident reluctance, almost to dread, that she evinced to the very thought of quitting Henhurst; all seemed to point to some particular in her self-govern-

ment that would not bear the light. He reflected on the company she had kept, on the temptations to which she had been exposed, and he trembled.

No one was a truer nomenclator than Mr. Fitzosborn when he spoke of virtue and vice in which he had no share; he was unacquainted with, and would not have understood, the modern vocabulary. He knew not what was meant by "an amiable weakness." He had no conception that "an unfortunate passion" explained the premeditated invasion of the peace and honour of a husband, or "indiscretion" the grossest act of unfaithfulness in a wife. He knew nothing of "vows which, registered in heaven," annulled those registered on earth; of "the union of hearts," that superseded all other union: nor could he better understand that seduction was "gallantry," or murder "a point of honour." He did not know that "a little derangement" meant bankruptcy, or "the settling one's affairs" was depriving one's creditors of half their

due. He was not aware that "candour" was the toleration of every vice; or "freedom from prejudice," infidelity. Nor were his principles much more liberal than his knowledge in the English language was extended. He would not allow that a young woman who spent the most part of her time in frivolous amusements, or selfish gratifications, was a Christian: or that luxurious refinement in accommodation, in ornament, in dress, or in food, was consistent with sober-mindedness. Nor could he readily admit that coquetry, dissimulation, or extravagance, were "youthful follies—only freaks of thoughtless youth." With him they tainted, and they stamp the character.

With such limited comprehension, and such narrow opinions, it was not wonderful that Mr. Fitzosborn, adhering in his notions to the old boundaries of the path of uprightness, should entertain some fears that Caroline might have deviated from so narrow a line: what the nature of her wanderings might have

been he was at a loss even to conjecture. When he called to mind the purity, the simplicity, the humility of her sentiments, he felt that it was impossible that the love of vice, the love of the world, or the love of self, should dwell in her heart. When he considered the ingenuousness of her countenance, the frankness of her manners, the correctness of her speech, free at once from exaggeration and confusion, he found it absurd to suspect her of dissimulation. All that she chose to reveal she had revealed clearly — even virgin modesty had not misled her, when compelled to speak at all, to speak more or less than the truth, painful and humiliating as that truth must have been. She had asserted her innocence; she had even laid claim to merit. Was this consistent, in such a character as Caroline's, with a sense of guilt? Yet guilty in some way she must be; there was no other explanation of the mystery that she maintained, of the agonies that she had suffered. Again and again did Mr. Fitzosborn repulse

this conclusion; but again and again it returned, and fastened itself so immovably on his understanding, that no efforts of his heart could shake it off.

Farewell, then, for ever, to the delight that the company and conversation of Caroline had imparted! — The illusion was destroyed; this angel of light was but like the rest of her fellow mortals; and virtue was but a name — for Caroline was not virtuous!

“She shall yet continue with me,” thought he; “the poor thing desires to do so — perhaps this is the only place of safety for her: yet to see her, to hear her, and not dare to love her! — the task will be a hard one.” And to *love* what he believed to be contaminated by vice or folly, was by Mr. Fitzosborn considered as no venial weakness; yet not to love Caroline he found to be impossible; and this opposition between his feelings and his principles produced for her a very grievous effect. When absent from her, he thought of her only with the tenderest compassion; but the agitation that the

sight of her occasioned, the perpetual contest between the pleasure that she gave him, and the opinion that he ought not to receive pleasure from her, irritated his temper; and he treated her by turns with the most chilling coldness and the most caustic austerity. Caroline's spirits almost sunk under such undeserved harshness. That it *was* undeserved was her best consolation. She called in aid an increased activity in the pursuit of all that could inform her understanding, or gratify her benevolence. As she was now at full liberty to dispose of her time, she extended her rambles amongst the poor: she often spent whole mornings with them, either instructing the children, or allaying the pains of sickness or of age. Insensibly she formed a little circle of friends and panegyrists around her, who pressed upon her observation, and covered her with blessings whenever she appeared, more especially as she went and returned every Sunday to and from the place of public worship.

This increased interest that Caroline had excited could not escape the notice

of Mr. Fitzosborn. He said one day, somewhat peevishly — “ You are become very popular, I perceive.” — Caroline answered modestly, “ The greater leisure which I now have gives me more time to look to these poor people.” — “ But looking alone,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, “ does not satisfy such admirers as these.” — “ Your bounty, sir,” returned Caroline, “ does all the rest.” — “ And, pray, why not your bounty? — have you nothing to give?” — “ I endeavour,” said Caroline, in some confusion, “ to proportion my expenditure to my means.” — “ It is prudently done,” said Mr. Fitzosborn, with a darkened brow.

These questions, and this observation, arose from a suspicion which, amidst the variety of conjectures that tormented Mr. Fitzosborn as to the nature of Caroline's turpitude, had lately stolen into his mind: he began to believe that she was mercenary. To this he referred her refusal of a poor man, even though he was the man she loved: to this he imputed her former recommendation of

Edward to his favour. The Henhurst estate would have made his hand well worthy her acceptance; and to this he imputed the warmth of her rejection when he was offered to her only as the fabricator of his own fortunes. Here too he thought he found the spring of her earnest wish to remain shut up from all the world with him. Every attraction exerted to please him rose up in judgment against her. As his growing favour, he was persuaded, had generated a hope that she would be his heir, so he thought he saw her cling to this hope under every present discouragement.

It is true there were facts which strongly militated against such a notion; her absolute refusal of Mr. Beaumont, though in opposition to his declared wish — her resolute concealment of the cause of her rejection of Edward, though such refusal, and such concealment, had manifestly lost her his esteem — her perfect freedom from all servility, from all flattery — he saw her drooping under his displeasure; yet she seemed rather to

mourn the loss of a happiness to which she had a right, than to supplicate for a boon—all spoke the independence, the disinterestedness of the mind of Caroline; yet all was not sufficient to destroy the opinion founded on contrary, and, as he thought, better grounds.

The occurrence of daily little circumstances served to confirm him more and more in this opinion. He was as minute an observer as was her father; and though the objects of his observation were different, they did not less certainly serve with him to stamp the female character. As to the garments that Caroline wore, Mr. Fitzosborn was wholly indifferent; while there was nothing that militated against modesty, neatness, and cleanliness, he could not have told one hour what she had worn the last; but there was scarcely a word, a look, from whence he did not draw some conclusion as to her moral character.

The opportunities for spending money, except in charity, did not often occur at Henhurst. Charity she had almost dis-

claimed, and it therefore appeared to him that she did not spend money at all. If a new work was advertised, or an itinerant merchant offered his goods to sale, Caroline showed no inclination to gratify either her own literary taste, or to indulge the humbler fancies of any of the domestics:—she seemed neither to have wants nor wishes—there were no signs about her of that readiness of expenditure which flows from a benevolent heart and a full purse. Mr. Fitzosborn had no doubt but that she possessed the one—his conclusion, therefore, that she wanted the other, was not wholly illogical.—“Fifteen hundred pounds a year,” would he say to himself, “and never forget the value of a guinea!—at nineteen too!”

Short of the actual commission of crime, no supposed failure in the character of Caroline could have been more fatal to her favour with her uncle.—“Covetousness,” would he say, “if it want the activity of vice, is the smotherer of every virtue. No, no, I must

not be seduced by the lustre of the jewel to forget that it is false !”

Caroline was not unaware of the interpretation that the economy to which she was compelled would bear ; and perhaps the imputation that it brought upon her was one of her most severe mortifications. But it was not *wholly* by the sense of its injustice that she was left to struggle with the pain that it occasioned. She had still one drop of sweet, in her bitter cup — and this was the animated praise and the ardent affection of Edward. Scarcely a post passed without bringing her a letter or a packet from him. Sometimes it was a new book — sometimes an amusing print — sometimes the gossip of the day, or the anticipation of public intelligence from abroad ; but whatever was the pretence for addressing her, or whether he wrote shortly or at length, there was always so warm a colouring of her virtues thrown over his expressions, or so lively an image of the sense that he had of them impressed on all that he wrote, that Caro-

line could no longer hesitate to believe that he really loved her. There were, indeed, sometimes words that put it out of doubt that he wished her to feel that he did so; and if he still drew a veil over the sentiments of his heart, it seemed done rather from a fear of offending her than from any hesitation in himself. Caroline imagined that she saw in this change of Edward's manner of addressing her the workings of a noble and ingenuous mind. His former reserve and guarded affection, while fortune made her so much his superior, spoke his disinterestedness; while she saw in his present half-concealed and half-expressed passion all the deference that uncertainty should give, and all the confidence that a sense of the moderation of her character ought to inspire. "He knows," said she exultingly to herself, "that if he can win my heart, I shall not refuse to share with him the humble comforts that his limited property can give." That he would not be the heir of his uncle she thought that she had al-

most a proof, in the manner that, when offering her his hand, Mr. Fitzosborn had spoken of the deprivations to which she must submit in becoming his wife. Who this mysterious heir would be, seldom engaged her thoughts; and when it did, she had the candour, which her uncle failed of in judging her conduct, to believe that all might be as it ought to be, though she could not discover how.

CHAP. VII.

By the consciousness of her own rectitude, by her activity, and above all, it must be confessed, by the pleasure resulting from her new-sprung hope, Caroline was enabled to endure with fortitude, and with all the cheerfulness that he would allow her to manifest, the increasing displeasure of her uncle. Ill at ease with himself, tormented with suspicion, unable to decide between the apparent excellence of Caroline and her supposed imperfection, he continually broke the resolution, which he as often renewed, of treating her with gentleness. His regrets for the harshness into which he was again and again betrayed, preyed upon his mind ; he lost all self-command ; and so poignant was his self-reproach for this weakness of mind, that he fell sick.

Caroline had seen the approach of disease some time before it decidedly de-

clared itself, and had endeavoured to ward off the blow by every means in her power—but in vain. After a restless and painful night, Mr. Fitzosborn found himself, one morning, in a high fever.

Caroline was instantly summoned by his alarmed attendants to his apartment; and when she approached the bed, she was shocked to behold the inflamed cheek, and burning eye, which her uncle turned towards her.

“What brings you here, Caroline?” said he.

“I am told you are not well, sir,” said she, taking his hand: “I am afraid it is true—you are too hot.”

“It may be the forerunner of being too cold,” returned Mr. Fitzosborn.

“But leave me, Caroline; the sight of you agitates me.”

“*Never*,” said Caroline fervently, “will I leave you—never will I suffer another to perform those services that I can render you. Forgive me, my dear uncle—while I know that I *ought* to be

as dear to you as I have been, I will act as if I *were*."

"Strange!" said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"My dearest uncle," said Caroline, "let all thoughts of what I am be suspended. Now there is but one care: let me see you restored to health, and banish me from your presence for ever."

"You treat me like an infant," said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"The sick are infants," returned Caroline, gayly, "and must be governed. Now you shall see how well I can rule."

Mr. Fitzosborn, taken unawares by the tone of playful tyranny that Caroline assumed, was not able to make any farther opposition. He suffered her to give orders for a physician; he submitted to the regulations that she made in his chamber; accepted from her hand the slight febrifuge that she had prepared; and followed her, in spite of himself, with a look of ineffable delight—as she did all this with the calmness of reason

which sees what is best, and with the assiduity of affection which delights in administering it. The access of the fever was violent. The physician expressed some alarm for his patient, and enjoined the most perfect quiet and most watchful attention. Caroline undertook to enforce the one, and to perform the other. She watched by the sick bed night and day, gave all the medicines with her own hand, and preserved so entire a command over her uncle as surprised the attendants, and inspired an equal obedience on their part. The pleasure that Mr. Fitzosborn, even against his will, received from the well directed and unwearied cares of Caroline, contributed more to his amendment than all the skill of the physician. A few days saw him convalescent, and a few more enabled him to leave his room. As Mr. Fitzosborn returned to health, Caroline resumed the respectful deference of humble duty, and her uncle relapsed into his silence and his thoughtfulness; but all harshness had disappeared. If his

words were not tender, his voice was the voice of affection. "Child!" "my dear!" sometimes escaped him; and she perceived that, as he looked at her, the tear would often rise to his eye, and trickle down his cheek. She would then venture to take his hand, and press it to her heart, nor did he repulse her; but gently pulling away his hand, he would sigh, and turn from her. A week had now passed, and no further step was taken towards reconciliation or confidence on either side; when one morning, instead of withdrawing as usual to his library, he remained in the breakfast-room, and addressing Caroline, he said, "I can no longer endure the terms that we are upon: if you will not give me your confidence, I will give you mine. The obligations that I have lately received from your hands, from whatever motive they sprung, have bound me to you in bonds of gratitude that never can be broken. I will confess, also, that I love you with a warmth and tenderness that my reason condemns: for, in spite of my obliga-

tions, in spite of my affections, you have lost my esteem. What you have so lately done for me has in no degree elucidated the mystery of your past conduct, nor reconciled its inconsistencies. This mystery, this inconsistency, must rise from some taint, some radical imperfection in your character, which though I cannot discover, I cannot doubt. Although the fascination of your manners, your apparent regard for me, still keep their hold of my affections, yet they are not able to blind me to the errors of your conduct. I can ill support the uneasiness that such a contrariety of feeling gives rise to, and it would be easier to part with you altogether. But I will not throw you back upon the world, there perhaps to consummate the destruction of the fairest promise of human excellence ever given. My house shall be your asylum while you wish it to be so; but I must deal plainly with you, that no ill-founded notion as to the effect of my so openly avowed^d and I fear so ill-placed a partiality may nourish expectations that *must*

end in disappointment. When you know unequivocally what you have to look to from me, you may probably be the more ready to accept of the degree of happiness that is in your power. *That* Edward, whose hand you have refused, professing to love him, that Edward is to be my heir. Some months have now passed since I caused him so far to understand my intentions as to let him know that it depended upon himself whether or no he was to be the future master of Henhurst. He received this information under the seal of the most sacred secrecy, the most solemn annunciation, that if he suffered the secret to escape, either by design or inadvertency, the prize would be lost. He has conducted himself under this trial to my perfect satisfaction. His diligence in his profession, the sobriety of his habits, have remained the same since he had a reasonable hope of being sometime master of fifteen thousand pounds per annum, as when he believed that his daily bread depended upon his daily industry.

I mean now to try him as the acknowledged heir of all that I am worth. I intend to expose him to the servility of dependants, the flattery of expectants—to put into his hands the dangerous alternative of using or misusing wealth. I mean to establish him in this house as my *son*!”

The various emotions to which this speech gave rise in the breast of Caroline, were all in the eyes of her uncle unfavourable to her character. He saw the paleness which spread itself over her cheek, when he declared that she had lost his esteem, suddenly change to the varied colour, as he thought it, of offended pride as he proceeded to account for the plainness of his dealing; and again the glow gave way to a death-like hue, as he informed her that Edward was to be his heir. In each successive emotion he saw but one feeling, and that feeling avarice; while in her inability to speak, occasioned by the variety of emotion with which she was assailed, he recog-

nised but the sullenness of disappointed ambition. After a moment's pause, which had been passed in a severe scrutiny of Caroline's countenance, Mr. Fitzosborn resumed—"As it is impossible that I can understand what passes in a heart so inexplicable as yours, I cannot guess whether the residing in the same house with Edward will be painful or pleasant to you: if the former, you will be at liberty to depart—if the latter, the apartment and the accommodation which you have had hitherto, shall be yours."

Caroline could now speak—and throwing herself at her uncle's feet, "Oh, my uncle! my kind, my cruel, my mistaken uncle! let me but remain under your roof!—I ask no more. My safety, my happiness, my all of existence below is here!"

"And can you bear to see another fill the place which you have so long held? Can you bear to see the homage, the respect that has so long awaited you as the

supposed heiress of Henhurst, transferred to the man whom you have refused for your husband?"

"Oh, torture me not!" said Caroline: "were I mistress of the universe, I would give it to Edward!"

"Astonishing!" said her uncle: "you would then give him every thing but yourself?"

"Oh, question me not!" said Caroline: "it is not for me to clear up this mystery; Edward perhaps may."

"We will then refer it to Edward," said Mr. Fitzosborn, feeling at the same moment an intolerable weight taken off his spirits. "If Caroline dare refer her conduct to Edward," thought he, "that conduct cannot be very culpable." But suspicion that Edward as his heir, and Edward as a poor practitioner of the law, weighed differently in the estimation of Caroline, repressed his pleasure, and still kept the balance against her.

Mr. Fitzosborn retired, for the purpose of making the communication of his intentions to Edward; and Caroline with-

drew to her own room, there to still the tumult of feeling that so unlooked-for an occurrence had occasioned.

Caroline, confident in the love of Edward, could not fear but that he would seek her as soon as he had power to do so. Nay, she thought she now saw, in the intimation that he had already received of his uncle's intended favour, the origin of that increased openness of affection which he had manifested towards her, and the thought endeared him to her; nor could she scruple, portionless as she was, to give herself to him, who would now have sufficient to supply all deficiencies on her part. To him she thought she might safely refer whether her loss of fortune should be revealed or kept secret from her uncle. She knew the respect he would have for the delicacy of her feelings towards her parent; but in contemplating him as the guide and controller of her future life, she felt that he alone ought to determine with how much or how little

mystery as to her past conduct he would accept her as his wife. She had no apprehension but that her uncle would look with pleasure on the union of two people, of whom he professed to love the one, and to esteem the other. In a pecuniary light she knew he would regard the loss of her fortune as dust upon the balance; and as she imaged to herself the happy future that all these reflexions gave to her prospects, she forgot the intervening present, wherein she still remained an object of suspicion to her uncle, and from whence might spring the disappointment of all her hopes. Her brightened eye, and glowing cheek, told tales to Mr. Fitzosborn which did not increase her credit with him; while he read in them rather the triumph of mercenary ambition than the modest hopes of disinterested love.

“That girl,” said he to himself, “now believes herself in possession of all her wishes. She trusts to the power

of her charms to bend both Edward and myself to her will: but she shall not be gratified; Edward shall not have a mercenary wife."

CHAP. VIII.

AFTER a night passed in visions of the most perfect human happiness, Caroline rose to meet her uncle in the chapel. She was alarmed with the alteration that had taken place in his countenance from the night before. It was impressed not only by the lines of grief, but horror. He greeted her, however, kindly, performed his devotions with more than usual fervour, and suffered her to give him her arm, as they went to the breakfast-room. She perceived that he trembled, and that her support was necessary to him. She took hold of his hand. "Are you not well?" said she.

"Oh, Caroline!" returned he, "what are all human hopes?—what is all human virtue?"

Caroline knew not whether the apos-

trophe was addressed to her. She seated her trembling charge, and taking her place by his side, "My dearest sir," said she, "what has happened thus to discompose you?"

"Edward," said he, clasping his hands together, "Edward is a villain!"

"Impossible!" said Caroline: "I will stake my life on his integrity."

"And lose it!" returned Mr. Fitzosborn. "He has seduced the daughter of Lord Evelyn—he has secreted her—and being called to account by her brother, he refused to meet him, and bears the name of coward!"

"Some enemy has slandered him to you, sir," said Caroline: "some base heart, that envies the favour which you meant to show him, has calumniated him. A seducer!—a coward! Oh, no, no! Edward knows no fear but that of doing wrong!"

"Would to God I could think so!" replied Mr. Fitzosborn. "Read this."—He gave into Caroline's hands a letter.

She took it trembling—she read it—and happiness and hope seemed fled for ever. These were the contents.

“ My dear old friend,—if it were possible to conceal from you such a story as I have to tell, sacred as I hold the promise I have given you, and jealous as I am of my own integrity, I would yet keep it from your knowledge for ever. Hitherto with what pleasure have I performed the task you gave me, of watching over the conduct of your nephew!—how have I exulted in his growing virtues, and boasted of the stability of his principles! No objection to be made to him, but a little singularity. But it is now for him to reconcile seduction and cowardice with virtue and magnanimity! The tale is told in few words: Edward has seduced and taken away the second daughter of Lord Evelyn, and, on being called to answer for his conduct by her brother, has refused to fight! In a good cause I know you would have admired this part of the business; and there is

something, I must confess, in the circumstances of so unpardonable a refusal, that, even now, may not wholly disagree with some of those odd and out of the way notions that I know you hold. Thus it has been told to me:—On the young lady's absence various conjectures arose; for, it seems, so cunningly had she and your precious nephew managed their affairs, that not one of her relations suspected any connexion between them. Edward, it is true, visited at the house familiarly enough, and was there received with every distinction that was due to his character and merit, and the stock from whence he sprung; but no apparent intimacy subsisted between him and the lady. The lady's maid had disappeared as well as herself. There were for some days no traces to be found as to whence she had withdrawn, or at whose suggestion. A younger sister, a girl of twelve years old, at length recollected, that the evening before she disappeared she had seen her in earnest conversation with your nephew, and that, when they

parted, she had heard him say, 'I will not fail you.' Faint as were the hopes that could be fastened on such a circumstance, and improbable as the well-reputed integrity of Edward made any supposition which attached villany to him, yet despair of better information induced Mr. Evelyn to wait upon your nephew. He has a manly spirit, and knows how to go directly to the point with equal clearness and decorum.

" 'I am come,' said he to Edward, 'to ask you, on the word of a man of honour, whether you know any thing of my sister?'

" 'Under such an adjuration,' replied Edward, 'I can make you only one answer. I do.'

" 'Heavens and earth!' exclaimed Mr. Evelyn, 'are you then a villain?'

" 'I am no villain,' said Edward.

" 'Are you married?'

" 'No.'

" 'Then you are a villain.'

" 'Forbear to speak a word,' said

Edward, 'which it ill befits you to use, and which I must not hear.'

" 'Speak—clear yourself—tell me all.'

" 'All that I can tell you I will. I know the place where your sister has withdrawn; I know her motive for withdrawing: but there is no power that shall extort from me the latter, nor any but a legal one that shall make me disclose the former.'

" 'Then must your life pay the forfeit of your silence. I will send a friend to you who will settle every preliminary.'

" 'Stay,' said Edward. 'Mr. Evelyn, I will not fight.'

" 'Not fight, Fitzosborn! You are no coward. How is this?'

" 'You know I will not fight,' said Edward; 'you have often heard me declare my mind upon that subject. I need not enter into my reasons; they are registered in a court from whence there is no appeal. Man I do not fear, God I do.'

“ ‘And shall a canting methodist rob my sister of her honour, and shall I not have it in my power to avenge the insult?’

“ ‘I am ready,’ returned Edward, ‘to acknowledge that the interests that we have to discuss are of the highest nature. The blessings of time and eternity hang on the issue of our dispute. I know that the affections, and even the passions, are to be taken into the consideration of the question; but neither the one nor the other must *decide* it. Whatever injury I may be supposed to have done, the reparation lies not in revenge. Nor can you more innocently seek the gratification of that impulse of the mind than I that of a less sanguinary passion. Would you, in the very act of punishing my guilt, be guilty yourself?—would you desire that I should be doubly guilty? The question between us is not life, is not honour, but crime!—and dare we, while we believe a God and an hereafter, knowingly, premeditatedly take upon conscience the hazard of crime?’

" 'Peace, canting hypocrite ! peace ' returned Mr. Evelyn. ' Shall the man who has betrayed the confidence of a trusting woman talk of conscience ?'

" ' I am no such man,' said Edward ; ' your sister will tell you that I am not. But while I must *appear* guilty, in your eyes, I confess that you have a right to look for reparation at my hands ; and any possible reparation, that does not involve the interests of eternity, I am willing to make.'

" ' Shall the hand of my sister reward seduction ?' said Mr. Evelyn. ' No, sir, I have a right to choose my reparation, and my reparation shall not be your reward. You must meet me.'

" ' Not as an enemy. I will ingenuously confess I *dare* not.'

" ' Then live the infamy of all who once called you friend,' said Mr. Evelyn, raising at the same time his hand.

" Edward recoiled a few steps. ' Forbear !' said he : ' disgrace not yourself and me. Though I will not commit offence, I will repel injury !'

“ ‘ You are below my notice,’ said Mr. Evelyn, and instantly withdrew.

“ These particulars are related by Mr. Evelyn, who acknowledges that Edward over-awed him ; that never before had he felt how little was revenge ; and that never did guilt, the complicated guilt of seduction and cowardice, appear so like dignified innocence, and even virtue. For who can doubt that Edward is guilty?—Yet he walks about with an erect air, with a serious, but not dejected countenance ; and though shunned by most, is still received by others. But what astonishes the world more than any other circumstance, is the friendship that this affair seems to have given birth to between Edward and Mr. Beaumont. Only slightly known to each other before, they are now scarcely ever asunder. In all companies Mr. Beaumont is the defender of Edward’s fame. He maintains that, in a Christian country, it is a shame that there should be found advocates for revenge and murder ; that the first movement that stimulates to duel-

ling is a principle that includes within itself the reprobation of our God; and that the man who acts up to the principles of Christianity, calls for the support and countenance of all who profess themselves Christians. 'I do not hear Mr. Fitzosborn stigmatized,' says he, 'because he is supposed to have betrayed the virtue of a too easy female—that matter is left to be settled between him and his conscience, no door is shut against him upon that account; but he is disgraced because he has refused to aggravate his guilt by hazarding his own life, and that of a fellow-creature. You say this is cowardice. Were it so, physical cowardice is no moral taint. Shall he be banished from society rather for a fault in his nerves than in his heart? But can we believe that the man who has till this moment exercised every manly, every noble quality, can be a coward to his fellow man? To his God he professes that he is, and we ought to value him the more for such fear; were it universal, the golden age would be

restored. We need in that case look no farther than the earth we tread for all the blessedness of Heaven. No,' adds he with warmth, 'I revere the man who prefers the laws of his country, and the laws of his God, to those of that fanciful and Proteus-like phantom ycleped honour. Mr. Fitzosborn knows the price which he pays for the choice he makes; and here we have as much reason to admire his superior skill in calculation, as the greatness of mind shown in his decision. It is mortal infamy rather than immortal crime that he has chosen; and who will say that he has not chosen well?' When it is urged against such reasoning, that the man who has been guilty of seduction cannot refuse a duel upon principle:

"Mr. Beaumont replies, 'That case is not before us: a moment of frailty does not imply the guilt of seduction.' Why should we not be as ready to believe that he has not been thus guilty, because he refuses to fight a duel from a religious principle, as to conclude that he cannot

act from such a principle, because he has been thus guilty? Is it impossible because a man has been wrong in one particular, that he should not be right in any? Let those who will, withdraw their favour from Mr. Fitzosborn on account of his connexion with Miss Evelyn, there will be nothing to object to them; but let not those who profess even to believe only the moral part of the Gospel brand him with ignominy because he has obeyed the precepts of it.

“ I know not, my dear sir, which side of the argument you will take: for my part I stick to my old notions — I am too old to change. Edward in my mind *was* a noble boy; he is now a poltroon, who dare not defend the mischief he has dared to do. All that Mr. Beaumont says is true, there is no denying it. We read of such things in our Bibles, and hear them from our pulpits; but then if we are to live in the world, we must do as the world does. Impossibilities cannot be required of us. Better not live than live in infamy. There are cases, in which we must ‘jump

the world to come,' and, where we cannot plead obedience, appeal to mercy. I know all this will make you angry; but I know, notwithstanding, that it will vex you to the heart to have your boy a coward. You cannot make a coward your heir, and he might have known this; and yet at the very moment when all his hopes were on the point of being realized, thus with his own hand to dash the golden cup to the ground! No great proof *this* of his skill in calculation. The boy is a fool, if he is not a coward. I would rather he had run away with twenty misses than have refused to give the man he has offended the satisfaction of a gentleman — and there is an end of the matter.

“ I know no more concerning this business but that the young lady, I find, acquits Edward on the point of *seduction*. She refuses to return to her family, or to inform them where she is. The family make no farther attempts to recover her, so that Edward will have this modern Eloisa on his hands, which, perhaps, they

think is no inadequate punishment for his offences.

"It grieves me to send you such ill news, my old friend. It shows how vain are all human cares. You, with all your particularities, and your determination that your money should only go to merit, are not likely to be better off than those who let things go on the usual course: yet lay not your disappointment too much to heart. Look around you: a worthy heir perhaps may yet be found, and I trust there are many years yet to pass before an heir is wanted.

"I am ever yours,

"WILLIAM BEAUCHAMP."

The style of this letter ill accorded with the emotions that it excited, both in Caroline and her uncle. The latter it had struck with horror, and the former it now overwhelmed with grief. Having read it, she returned it to her uncle without speaking.

"Will you still stake your life on the integrity of Edward?" interrogated he.

“Does he know no fear but that of doing wrong?”

“You have read, sir,” returned Caroline, “what Mr. Beauchamp says. You would not have Edward a duellist?”

“No,” said Mr. Fitzosborn; “had he been so, I should equally have abandoned him: but I would not have him a coward.”

“He is no coward,” said Caroline; “he has dared but too greatly: yet I thank God that he has not pushed his daring to the extremest point, that he has not added murder to —.” She stopt.

“Do you believe that he is withheld by principle from meeting Mr. Evelyn?”

“Most unfeignedly I do,” returned Caroline: “and why should it not be so? Does one error imply a general dereliction of virtue? Slighter motives have been held no unmanly cause for refusing a challenge: why should the greatest to which the human mind can bend, draw on the imputation of cowardice?— Is a tenderness for a worthless woman a

more honourable stimulus from which to brave the censures of the world than the interests of an immortal soul? Shall we applaud in the one case, and condemn in the other?"

"Has he then," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "lost no merit in your eyes by refusing a challenge?"

"Lost!" repeated Caroline: "Oh, if that were all, my heart would rejoice at such a proof of the solid foundation of his excellence!"

"Excellence!" repeated Mr. Fitzosborn, contemptuously.

"My dearest uncle," said Caroline, "let us bound our censures to what is really wrong. Let not you and me be less charitable, less candid, than a stranger."

"You know not what interest you are thus pleading against," said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"I am pleading the interest of justice," said Caroline.

"And the interests of a rival," said Mr. Fitzosborn.

Caroline drooped her head. "I had

never any claim upon Edward," said she, faintly, "and now I never can have any. Let not my weakness make any part of the question."

"Would you have me give my property to the seducer of innocence?"

"I would have you, sir," said Caroline, with a voice scarcely articulate, "examine the matter with all the calmness and candour of which you are so capable; and then I would have you do what is right and good in your own eyes, for that will be right and good in fact."

"What is there to examine? You see Edward does not deny the charge of seduction."

"Not of attachment," said the agitated Caroline, "but surely of seduction."

"And do you admit the extenuating plea of a 'moment of frailty?'—Has vice with you two names?"

"Oh, no!" said Caroline, but in a voice that scarcely reached her uncle's ear.

"Would you have me encourage him

to marry the girl? Would you have me reward him for so doing?"

"I would have Edward perform all that he has promised," said the almost exhausted Caroline; "and I would have your kindness, my dear uncle, render his return to the path of rectitude as easy as in justice it ought to be."

"Thou art a perpetual enigma!" returned her uncle: "you refuse the man you love for no conceivable motive but what must disgrace you; and you plead in favour of those who stand at once between the gratification of your love and the advancement of your fortune. What am I to think of such inconsistencies?"

"As favourably as you can," said Caroline. It was all that she could say. Her voice here failed her, and she sat with her head rested on the arm of the sofa, in all the agony of suppressed emotion.

"How strange is all this!" exclaimed Mr. Fitzosborn. "Caroline, look up; give vent to your tears. You terrify me."

"Oh, my uncle!" said Caroline, bursting at length into tears, "forgive my weakness; or rather think not of me. I have no incurable wound—I have no guilty steps to retrace:—but Edward—oh, let us think of some balm for him!—some soothing for a mind, now, I fear, torn by all the agony of self-accusation: let him not be driven to despair! Do not, do not, my dearest uncle; cast him wholly from your favour!"

"Would you have me apply to him?" said Mr. Fitzosborn; "or do you suppose that he will dare to apply to me?"

"Harden not your heart against him," said Caroline, "and there may still be a happy future."

"No, Caroline, that is impossible: but withdraw. We equally want to be alone: each has much to regulate within. We will meet at dinner, and shall then be better able to determine what *can*, what *ought* to be done."

CHAP. IX.

THE command to withdraw was truly welcome to Caroline: she hoped, in the stillness of her own apartment, to subdue the tumult within, and to reconcile her thoughts to this sudden overthrow of her new-born hopes. She found, however, that fresh cause for emotion awaited her even in the asylum where she had hoped to regain her composure. A letter from Edward lay upon her table. She broke it open with the greatest impatience, and read it with an eagerness as though life itself had depended upon its contents. Yet having read it, she scarcely knew whether she were more or less miserable than before. Thus Edward had written.

“ You will hear that the man who has the honour to bear the same name with yourself, and who boasts of deriving his original from the same stock ; whom you

distinguished by your friendship, and who wished to be thought emulous of your virtues, is stigmatized as the seducer of innocence, and degraded as a coward! In the sacrifice that I have made of all my worldly prospects, of all that gladdens life, and all that dignifies it, I can scarcely hope that your good opinion, more valued than any other blessing on this side Heaven, will not be included. I can scarcely ask from your candour, the belief that the sacrifice has been made to principle: for what worthy principle can be supposed to actuate the man who is compelled to own that he has removed a daughter from the protection of her parents, and still retains her in a mysterious retirement? To assert innocence under such circumstances involves an absurdity which might revolt even folly itself, and appear a hardened effrontery that no candour can pardon. Yet I make this assertion, and appeal to the Knower of all secrets for the truth of it. I am persuaded that your heart will be most ready

to believe me; and if your understanding refuse to assent, I cannot complain. Not to have entered my protest against the imputations under which I labour, would have been to have acquiesced in their justice. Having done this, I dare presume no farther. Of all *secret* guilt I am innocent; of that which is before the public that public must judge, and I must bend to the award. In taking the part which I have done, I was aware of the magnitude of the hazard; nor must I now shrink from the consequence.— Heaven guard and bless the loveliest of its creatures! Farewell!

There was nothing in this letter calculated to lessen the pangs that Mr. Beauchamp's had inflicted. She scarcely knew to what the innocence which Edward so strongly asserted could apply. Of premeditated or complicated baseness she never for a moment had thought him guilty; and his refusal to give Mr. Evelyn a hostile meeting had her fullest approbation. But the fact of secreting a

woman of reputation from the knowledge of her family established the certainty of a connexion, which it was scarcely possible could consist with innocence. Yet he wrote not like a happy lover; nor could so degrading an attachment agree with the many marks of the ardent but delicate love which his late communication with Caroline bore. She was lost in conjecture; but on every side she saw the destruction of her own hopes, and, as she feared, the rectitude as well as the happiness of Edward. To preserve this rectitude, and to re-establish his happiness, she now resolved to make her most earnest care; and she persuaded herself that she had still sufficient interest with her uncle to induce him to contribute his utmost to both. Caroline showed Edward's letter to Mr. Fitzosborn; she pointed out his strong asseverations of innocence with respect to the lady: "and if he is innocent *there*," said the generous pleader, "how meritorious is the rest of his conduct! We must not condemn him unheard. At this very moment,

perhaps, he is reading your letter, my dear uncle, which calls him near you; which tells him that he is to be established in this house as your son. Alas! with what bitterness of regret must he now think of your intended kindness! Had it been announced a little, a very little sooner, who knows but it might have saved us all from this sad catastrophe? Edward could then have asked from Lord Evelyn the hand of his daughter, and all this evil might have been spared. Is it not possible to repair it? Is it not possible to restore the lady to her reputation, and Edward to his peace of mind!"

"Not as the inheritor of Henhurst — not as an inmate of this house, shall the degraded wife of Edward tread in the footsteps of my virtuous mother!"

"You do not *know* that this lady is *not* virtuous," said Caroline. "If Edward is innocent, so is she: their guilt or their innocence must stand or fall together. If you were to hear what Edward has to say ——"

" I know that she is indiscreet," interrupted Mr. Fitzosborn, " and indiscretion in a woman is vice. They have not our passions to plead; they are hedged round with so many safeguards, that no danger can approach them, except they meet it half way; and if she did not meet it *more* than half way, what then is Edward?"

Caroline but too painfully felt the inference, but she did not therefore give up the cause. " I mean not to plead for vice," said she, " nor can I speak of indiscretion as a wholly venial offence; but we know not the circumstances of the case: we cannot tell to which side the greater share of blame attaches—we do not know that it attaches to either. The lady herself, in part, acquits Edward. There is in such acquittal at least the merit of truth, perhaps of a generous self-condemnation. Let us not condemn him unheard. Whatever may be your determination, my dear sir, after having heard what Edward has to urge

in his excuse, you will not have to fear the being unjust."

"Do you wish to see Edward here?" said Mr. Fitzosborn. "Could you bear to look upon him? — to hear him plead the cause of a worthless rival with composure and dignity?"

"I hope I could," replied Caroline. "Whatever *have* been my wishes, they are all now centred in the fervent desire to restore Edward to happiness; to place him once more in the path of uprightness; to enable him to exercise those virtues which, however they may be tarnished, are genuine: and which, with proper care, may recover all their native brightness."

"Well, be it so," said Mr. Fitzosborn: "the trial shall be made; the trial of comparative worth: absolute merit I no longer hope to find. You, who can bear to see Edward," added he, "can, I suppose, bear to write to him: let us see in what terms you will summon him to appear before his judges — how

you will invite him to present himself before those to whom he ought not to be able to raise his eyes."

"Alas, my uncle!" said Caroline, "make not me the judge of Edward. It is not me whom he has offended: my favour held out to him no reward; my condemnation can add nothing to his deprivation."

"He says otherwise," returned Mr. Fitzosborn. "'Your good opinion, more valued than every other blessing on this side Heaven.' It may be difficult to reconcile the compliment with his conduct; but we must allow some motive for so exclusive a preference. There must be some value in an approbation which outweighed the loss of reputation and of fortune. But, if you will not be a judge, will you be an advocate in this cause?"

"No farther than I have been," said Caroline. "See him, hear him: I presume to ask no more."

"I will see him, I will hear him: it is your task to tell him so."

Caroline took up a pen, and astonished her uncle by the steadiness of hand, and readiness of thought, with which she wrote the following lines.

“ I am willing to allow of your appeal from the action to the motive, and to believe, that all that is *hidden* is right : but while so much of what is *known* is wrong, you owe it to the interests of virtue, you owe it to yourself, to be more explicit — not to me ; I have no demands upon you ; but to him who is the present head of the stock from whence we both descend ; to him who has fostered your youth, and who was about to have crowned your manhood with every blessing. A kindness, that not all the appearances which are against you can turn aside from its object, allows you to plead your own cause, and invites you to Henhurst for this purpose.”

“ Admirable girl ! ” said Mr. Fitzosborn, with transport, and eyeing her at the same time with a delight which called

the colour to her cheek; "with what delicacy, with what dignity have you explained yourself! and is there indeed a flaw in this jewel which robs it of half its worth?"——

CHAP. X.

EVERY intervening hour which passed between the despatching of this letter, to the one in which it was possible that Edward should arrive in consequence of it, were to Caroline hours of the utmost uneasiness. She dreaded alike that Edward should accept, or that he should neglect, the invitation. She wished, and she feared to see him : she feared to show him too much, or too little regard ; and shrunk from the contest of dignity and sincerity that she saw lay before her. This state of agitation was not however continued so long as she had calculated upon ; before even she had thought it possible that Edward should arrive, the servant announced him, and he stood before her and her uncle. Mr. Fitzosborn started as with horror ; while Caroline, rising, offered a chair to Edward.

“ No,” said Edward, with a voice of

the greatest agitation, while his lips quivered, and every limb trembled, "I stand here a culprit—I sit not in the presence of my judges."

"There is your judge," said Caroline, pointing to her uncle: "I have no jurisdiction here."

"Are you my accuser, then?"—said Edward, in a tone of increasing misery.

"Certainly not," returned Caroline.

"May I hope you will be my advocate?" cried Edward.

"Make clear the innocence which you have so strenuously asserted," said Caroline, "and you will want no advocate."

"Young man," said Mr. Fitzosborn, in a voice that thrilled through every vein of both his auditors, "are you married?"

"No."

"Do you intend to marry?"

"No."

"Do your objections to marriage arise from pecuniary considerations, or from disinclination to the state?"

" From neither."

" Will you restore the female you have degraded to the protection of her natural friends?"

" I cannot."

" Is it your purpose to continue in the guilty commerce you have begun?"

" I acknowledge no guilty commerce. I assert my innocence."

" What proof do you bring of your innocence?"

" I have no proof: I confess that every appearance is against me—every appearance must remain against me."

" What result, then, could you hope from this interview?"

" To show my obedience to your commands; to deprecate your ill opinion; to thank you on my knees," cried he, falling at Mr. Fitzosborn's feet, " as I now do, for all your past, for all your intended kindness; and to beg of Heaven eternal blessings on your head."

" Edward!" said Mr. Fitzosborn, " how I have loved your fame, how I have studied your happiness, I will not now

tell you. The sunbeam that should have gilded my evening sky you have obscured: this is the smallest part of the evil. It matters not that we lie down in storms, if we awake to peace. But you have destroyed yourself—you have tinged the cheek of modesty with blushes—you have made the fair form of virtue droop her head—you have arrayed hypocrisy in the holy garment of religion: what innocence can subsist with crimes like these? For ever they have dissevered you from my bosom. beware lest they do not banish you from Heaven. I touch not on that part of your conduct which has sunk you to infamy in the eyes of the world. In the man of virtue such bold defiance of the opinion of his fellow-men had been most virtuous: in the man of vice it can only have added baseness to villany. I was willing to hear you, because I would not condemn you unheard. For yourself you have not been able to say any thing: you are self-condemned, and will not dare to appeal from the justice of the

sentence which casts you off from my affections, my esteem, my fortune, for ever."

"Oh, my uncle!" cried Caroline, clasping her hands together, "say not so; drive not repentance to despair. Some future day — some farther trial — some time of probation —"

"Silence!" said Mr. Fitzosborn. "I will hold no fellowship, no communication with seduction, with hypocrisy from this hour that young man and I are strangers. No future hour can reverse the determination of this; here ends all my romantic research after a degree of excellence which never existed but in a distempered brain. My aim must now be humbler; and while I declare you, Caroline, the heiress of all my possessions, I acknowledge a similar, though not an equal, disappointment in your character with that which I have experienced in Edward's."

"Impossible!" cried Edward. "Angels only are more pure, more excellent than Caroline."

"Young man," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "I take not your opinion of excellence. Caroline has merit, but it is limited merit; and I fear it is limited by the bound which, almost of all others, I could least have expected, or least have wished to see, in so young a person. Caroline is mercenary."

"Mercenary!" repeated Edward, with an accent of contemptuous incredulity.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Fitzosborn, disdainfully, "mercenary! I have watched her narrowly: with a purse overflowing with unappropriated wealth, her heart is not moved with the story of distress, nor her hand open to relieve it."

"A purse overflowing!" cried Edward. "Oh, no, no! she is poor, she is penniless!"

"Edward," said Caroline, "forbear!"

"No, I will speak," said Edward; "I will restore to my uncle that bright vision of excelling virtue which he believes lost for ever. His sun shall not set in clouds. His Caroline shall, with her wonderous virtues, gild his latest hours;

and in the contemplation of her worth he shall forget the imputed turpitude of Edward."

"I can bear no more," said Caroline; in an agony: "if confidence is to be violated, let me not witness it."

"Stay, Caroline," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "I command you, stay. After what has past, I must, I will know all—you have already referred me to Edward; I have a right to require an explanation at his hands. In restoring you to the fulness of my approbation he offers some compensation for his own depravity."

"My beloved cousin," said Edward, lost at that moment to every thing but the distress that he had occasioned Caroline, "forgive me: to hear you calumniated—to hear you called mercenary! Oh, heavens! *you* mercenary! I must have spoken or have died.—And I would rather have died," added he, putting his arm round her to preserve her from sinking to the ground, "than thus have

agitated that gentle, that generous bosom."

"Oh, you have undone me!" said Caroline. "My father!——"

"Let me support you, dearest of created beings!" cried Edward. "Sit down—rest your head on my shoulder.—Oh, Caroline! I am not wholly unworthy of such an honour."

"I am better," said Caroline, withdrawing herself from Edward's supporting arm: "let my uncle be obeyed."

"I already anticipate the story," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "Caroline's apostrophe has told me all."

"No, not all," cried Edward: "that she has been pillaged you may guess; but you know not, you cannot know, that when robbed of all her substance, her care was not for herself, but others—that she stript herself even to her last guinea to supply the wants of those who were then richer than herself."

"And who were those others?" said Mr. Fitzosborn.

Edward hesitated; but Caroline, has-

tilly throwing herself at her uncle's feet, exclaimed, "*That* part of the story be mine. It was Edward's mother, it was Edward's sisters, to whom in my affluence I offered an assistance due to relations so near in blood, so high in worth. If by so doing I have offended you, sir, sorry I may be, but I cannot repent."

"Child," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "I understand you not—my brain whirls round.—What? How? Rise! Offended! Why should I be offended? But tell me, has that rapacious father robbed you of all?"

"Of all," said Edward.

"No, not of all," said Caroline; "I have still sufficient for the modest comforts of life, and have lost nothing that I regret but the power of being useful to others."

"Come to my arms!" said Mr. Fitzosborn, with a degree of rapture never felt by him before; "come to my arms, and take possession of my heart! I see it all; I understand the whole. Your self-denial, your delicacy, your genero-

sity ! How unjust have I been to you ! But I will repair my faults : from you I will hear the whole detail, and you shall dictate what amends I shall make you.— Young man,” continued he, turning to Edward, “ I acknowledge the obligation I owe you ; but this obligation alters not the nature of facts. You must indeed have been a monster had you suffered this fair image of her Creator to have been calumniated in silence ; and yet you know not half her worth. Go, sir, and imitate, if you can, at humble distance, virtues of which, it must be confessed, you do not seem insensible.”

“ I obey,” said Edward. “ Time may bring me that vindication I dare not afford myself. I go, and I bear with me a grieved, a grateful, but not a self-accusing heart. Oh, my uncle ! for all I have received at your hands accept my thanks ; but most accept them for what you have withheld. In having restored Caroline to affluence you have given me that which I prize beyond all the riches of the earth. Let no thought

of me disturb your mutual peace: nor need it; for though I am wretched, I am not guilty." And thus saying, he quitted hastily the room.

Caroline, exhausted by the variety and violence of her feelings, and the efforts that she had made to control them, finding her task over, sunk gently back into the chair, and burst into tears.

"Weep not, my beloved!" said Mr. Fitzosborn, in an accent of love and tenderness which Caroline had never heard from him before. "You have no cause for tears. I ought to weep at the injustice I have done, at the harshness with which I have treated you. But I was jealous for your excellence, Caroline. It was pain intolerable to think less well of you than I had done. And why, dear child, should you inflict such pain upon me? Why keep a secret so injurious to yourself, so distressing to me?"

"Oh, ask me not why," said Caroline; "I can conceive that soul and body

part with less pain than this discovery costs me."

"And do you prize the reputation of a worthless father, a father but in name, above the peace of one who is and will be more to you than ever father was? Can you thus prefer the name to the thing?"

"Oh, my uncle, have mercy on me! A parent is sacred. The child deserves reprobation, that veils not a parent's shame."

"Thou martyr to thy duty!" said Mr. Fitzosborn, "I will have mercy upon thee:—I will not now ask for the particulars of this nefarious business; but I must have them; and never more must you, *shall* you, hold intercourse with so worthless a parent."

"Can it be permitted to a child," said Caroline, "to cast off a parent?"

"He has cast *you* off," returned Mr. Fitzosborn. "There is contamination, there is destruction, in communion with such an one; you must not hold it: and be not disturbed by the prohibition. The

man that abandoned you in your childhood, and has robbed you in your youth, is no father—he has not the affections of one; he will not feel the regrets of one:—he loves you not. As he would have sold you to a worthless lord, so he will resign you to a rich uncle; careless of your happiness, as your principles, so that he can see you in a situation where you may gratify his avarice or ambition.”

“Suffer me to retire, sir,” said the trembling Caroline. “I am really unequal any longer to such discussions.”

Mr. Fitzesborn rang for Caroline’s maid; and giving her his arm, supported her himself to her chamber. There having seen that every accommodation that she could want or wish awaited her, he pressed her tenderly to his heart.—“Be yourself, my dearest child,” said he—“the storm is past; let us rejoice in the sunshine.” And so saying, he left her.

CHAP. XI.

BUT, alas! the storm was not passed with Caroline; her mind had received wounds, such as not even the returning favour of her uncle, and still less his intended bounty, could heal. In having exposed the infamy of her father, however involuntarily, she felt culpable: and in the certainty which she now thought she had of Edward's attachment to another, she felt miserable. Impenetrable as was the veil that hung over the nature of his connexion with Miss Evelyn, she could not doubt but that it was grounded upon mutual affection; and confounded as she was with the inconsistency between such an affection, and the ardent and enthusiastic attachment which he manifested towards herself, she could not hesitate to decide where the preference lay; for Miss Evelyn was

taken, and Caroline was left. While there remained any hope of retaining for Edward the favour of Mr. Fitzosborn, Caroline had lost, in the activity with which she had pursued this object, all consciousness of how much her own happiness depended upon Edward. In the belief which she had for some time entertained that she was not less dear to him than he was to her, she had fostered, unknown to herself, a hope that they would one day be united; and in the prospect, so nearly realized, of his becoming the heir of Henhurst, she thought she had seen the fulfilment of this hope. She had awoke from this dream of happiness to the sad reality of Edward's degradation; of his ruined fortunes, and his alienated heart; yet grief and compassion made up all her feelings. She could not complain, for he had never told her that he loved, had never sought to obtain her love: she could not condemn, for she believed him innocent; she believed him more than innocent; she gave him credit for what she did not

understand, and she glorified him for what she thought she did understand. Yet she had lost him, even as a friend had lost him: for while so disgraceful a mystery hung over his actions, all intercourse between them must cease; and she could not but expect that he would emerge from this mystery only as the husband of another. If she endeavoured to escape from the pain of these reflexions she was met with the sense of her father's depravity, and the disclosure of his shame. She was herself to tell the story of both to one whose just indignation and abhorrence would be softened by no partiality of affection, by no sympathy with the weakness of humanity. While to do this seemed, to her feeling and compassionate heart, a little less offence against the sacredness of filial duty than that act which drew after it the curse of unborn nations.

For this disclosure she was now to prepare herself; and she endeavoured to do so by turning her thoughts to that Source of bounty from whence for ever

flow the streams of benevolence and consolation.

On her knees she recommended herself to God; to him she appealed, as a witness how reluctantly she had betrayed the errors of a parent. She prayed for that parent—she acknowledged the mercies that were still around her; and she arose consoled, strengthened, and composed.

When she attended her uncle he was, notwithstanding her newly-regained sedateness, struck with the alteration that a few hours of such severe agitation had produced in her countenance.

He pressed her tenderly to his heart. "This unworthy lover! This unnatural father!" said he, in a voice of compassion, "how they destroy you! We must have done with them both, my Caroline; and that we may, you shall now give all those details with which I *must* be acquainted; and then shall not the name of either be ever more uttered between us. Remember the condition on which this ring rests upon your finger.

If Edward is not a 'worthless coxcomb,' he is a still more reprehensible character. His distinguished intellect, the boasted rectitude of his principles, his power of self-control, so long manifested, and now so woefully overborne, colour his dereliction of the right way with a deeper hue of depravity than can attach to any of the sins of a mere coxcomb. I must not have your happiness broken in upon by a nourished partiality for such a person."

This speech nearly overcame the firmness of Caroline: yet she replied—"Nor shall it, my dear uncle. The virtues of Edward have been the objects of my love. He is not yet convicted of vice; my approbation, therefore, need not be withdrawn; but my love," added she blushing, "shall never voluntarily be given to that man whose heart I cannot now doubt is another's."

"Had he either heart or eyes," said Mr. Fitzosborn previously, "there was but one woman in the world that he could have loved. But let us talk of

him no more:—unconvicted, as you say he is, of vice, I could sooner believe that water flowed from fire, than that actions such as his sprung from virtue.”

Caroline felt that the present was not the moment in which she could hope successfully to combat with her uncle's prejudices; she was therefore silent, till called upon to fulfil the painful task of vilifying her father. This she did with all the mildness possible, consistent with truth: but the facts themselves were so loaded with infamy, that it is not surprising if the high strung virtue of Mr. Fitzosborn sent forth sounds which nearly annihilated the trembling Caroline.

He talked of prosecution, of punishment, of reprobation here and hereafter, till she sunk almost lifeless at his feet; while with uplifted eyes and hands she strove to deprecate an anger, which in its unchecked course must have swept away at once the innocent and the guilty.

Mr. Fitzosborn, little used to such violence of emotion, when called to recollection by the agonies of Caroline,

looked back on the storm which had been raised within him with surprise and contrition.

“ I am wrong,” said he, endeavouring to sooth Caroline, “ thus to suffer myself to be transported by any display of vice committed by unsanctified man ; that child of sin, that storehouse of evil ! I am more wrong thus to distress you, my injured, my virtuous child ! for you are virtuous, as virtuous as a human creature can be. I will therefore so far respect your weakness as to forego that strictness of justice by which such turpitude, such abandonment of all that is just, and good, and holy ; such alienation from all that is honourable in man, of all that is incumbent on a Christian, ought to be punished. But let us hear of no more hesitation ; no more doubts whether such a parent should be cast off. There is defilement in the very wish to hold further intercourse with such an one. I take on myself the task of telling him that you have done with him.”

Caroline was as unable as she felt it

was fruitless to make any reply ; she therefore submitted in silence. And Mr. Fitzosborn having taken two or three turns about the room, as if to collect his thoughts and calm his feelings, after a few moments reseated himself, and taking a pen wrote the following :

“ In learning that I am fully informed of the whole of your conduct with respect to your daughter, you will look to the just consequence of such a disclosure—prosecution, punishment, infamy : that such effects do not follow, you owe only to her whom you abandoned in her youth, and whom you have cheated and beggared in her riper years. In sacrificing justice to filial piety, I extend my respect for the feelings of your daughter to the utmost limit. Henceforth all communication between you must cease ; you have no longer a child, Caroline has no longer a father. You have broken every tie of nature ; you have made it a question whether there are any such ; wretched man that thou art ! Repent, if

thou canst; or, as thou hast lived in vice, thou must die in misery."

Caroline shrunk back with horror from so harsh an annunciation. "He will repent!" said she. "My uncle! he will repent."

"I pray Heaven it may be so!" said Mr. Fitzosborn, fervently: "and here let the subject be at rest for ever. This has been a day of no common discomposure: but it is past. We have had to do with the wicked; let us be thankful that we have escaped the contagion. We have each a plain duty before us; I, to repair the injustice that I and others have done you; you, to disentangle your affections from the control of a man who is not worthy of them. My work of reparation will begin by restoring you the independence that has been so basely stolen from you. No disclaimings," cried he, seeing that Caroline was about to interrupt him; "I could take no delight in your kindness, I could feel no confidence in your apparent virtues, were

you to be the creature of my daily bounty. My taste in happiness has a high relish; it requires the kind offices of disinterestedness; the obedience of independence; the manifestation of excellence that looks for no reward. By making you independent of pecuniary favour I may suffer from your unkindness, but I do not expose myself to your falsehood. Believing you rich, when in fact you were poor, I was led to take a wrong estimate of the liberality of your mind. In keeping you poor, I should lose the best means of rectifying this mistake:—as my almoner you might be lavish, as your own you can only be generous. Nor can you, without a settled and liberal income, bring into action the various and often contradictory virtues of prudence and benevolence, of self-denial, and a due regard to appearances. As I had intended to have tried Edward, by exposing him to all the temptations of affluence, and all the assailants that declared heirship to riches gives rise to, so do I intend to try you. The final

issue must depend upon your own conduct, and so it should do were you the offspring of my very self. In keeping you in the beggary to which you have been reduced, I should throw too much weight into one scale; by restoring you to the affluence which you have been accustomed to consider as your right, I give all the qualities, good and bad, of your head and heart, fair play: they cannot be repressed by servile fear; they cannot be disturbed by mercenary hope. I know what I expect from you; but that I have such expectations will not, I think, make part of your motive for action; I would not have it. You will receive in a few days securities for thirty thousand pounds; and take care," added he, with a kind of bitter smile, "that you guard them better than you did the last. The first self-abandonment was virtue; the second would be vice."

Caroline attempted to express her gratitude, and the high sense she had of a manner of thinking so generously singular; but Mr. Fitzosborn stopt her:—"No

words upon this subject, it is not worth it. Having told you what I intend to do, you will make your arrangements accordingly — and there is an end of the matter.”

At length this stormy and memorable day came to a close, and Caroline, on reviewing the events of it, knew not whether she should applaud or condemn herself, on finding that they had brought to her no accession of happiness. Was it weakness, or a praiseworthy disinterestedness, that refused to accept of a restitution to fortune, to the good opinion and unchecked love of her uncle, as a compensation for the loss that Edward had sustained of all these? and a conviction that his heart never had been, never could be hers? Was the cloud that hung over his virtues a just or allowable counterbalance in the scale of happiness for the recovered power of the free exercise of her own? Or, referring to another cause for the dejection of her mind, was the *discovery* of her father's vices more grievous to her than the knowledge of them?

In much dissatisfactory meditation of this kind did Caroline pass the hours of a sleepless night; but though dissatisfactory, it was not useless. It called her attention to the inward workings of her mind, and led to that energy of action in which true virtue consists. The result of all her self-examination was a conviction that the happiness to which she had to look forward must rather arise from the gratification that she could procure to others, than any that could apply personally to herself.

CHAP. XII.

THE revolution that had taken place in the purposes of Mr. Fitzosborn produced a great and very visible change in the economy of Henhurst. As the whole concerns of the household were regulated with much ceremony, the declared heiress was not to step into her place silently and undistinguished. Mr. Fitzosborn gave orders that the apartment which had been his mother's should be prepared for Caroline. He appointed the housekeeper to take her orders from her; the servants were informed that they were to consider her as their lady; and, in addition to her own footman, a servant out of livery was assigned her. Mr. Fitzosborn also declared, that he would henceforth receive the visits of the neighbourhood.

"I shall no longer live to myself," said he: "in having made Henhurst the permanent abode of Caroline, I must ren-

der it such a home as will enable her to mix with the rest of her species. I do not mean her for a recluse; I repeat, that Caroline must marry — she must therefore see and be seen.”

Such intimations were no sooner given than profited by. The neighbourhood was emulous who should first, and most, show respect to the newly declared heiress. The singular character of Mr. Fitzosborn, a mansion so long shut up from observation, excited universal curiosity, perhaps even more than the beauty and graces of Caroline; but united, the attraction was universal. There were mothers who had daughters somewhat past younger hopes, that thought Mr. Fitzosborn might still marry. There were fathers who, knowing that Caroline was the best match in the country, thought none more worthy of the prize than his own son. There were young ladies who wished to know how an heiress of fifteen thousand pounds a year dressed, and young gentlemen who longed to show how well they were in their own esteem. Some

came because they had heard their mothers talk of the gay days that they had spent at Henhurst in their youth; others in hopes of the gayeties that were yet to come. All sought their own amusement or interest, and all therefore were eager in the pursuit.

Caroline received this motley concourse with equal dignity and ease; and the modest simplicity with which she attended to the various wishes of her various guests contrasted well with the more stately civility and ceremonious politeness of Mr. Fitzosborn. All declared themselves charmed with Caroline; for, from the praise of youth, beauty, and obligingness, none dared openly to dissent. But Mr. Fitzosborn underwent some criticism; the young ladies, almost without exception, thought him "a gig" and "quiz." The mothers were more tolerant, though they allowed that he had "some strange notions." Some of the gentlemen dreaded his severity, and others applauded his goodness, and admired the vigour of his understanding; but while

his table was well served, and Caroline sat at the head of it, neither his gigism nor his severity were likely to render it unfurnished with guests.

So public a declaration in favour of Caroline, at the very period when Edward's conduct was the subject of general animadversion, connected her exaltation with his disgrace so pointedly, as to give her the most sensible uneasiness; and rendered what was in itself little pleasing to her, so insupportably irksome, that she earnestly entreated her uncle that there might be some cessation to the visits and visitings in which they were at present perpetually engaged. But the impulse was given, and poor Caroline found herself compelled to go on with equal weariness and perseverance. Nor was it at Henhurst only that the change in Caroline's fortune produced a very powerful sensation. She was inundated with letters from town, written by those with whom, while she continued there, she scarcely interchanged the civility of a courtesy; and obliged to reply to pro-

fessions of the warmest esteem from those who, for the last five months, seemed to have forgotten her existence. She had to repel hints how agreeable an invitation to Henhurst would be, and to discountenance malice, which sought to conciliate her favour by censure on Edward. Amongst these volumes of MSS. so little honourable to the writers, and so wearisome to Caroline, a letter from Lady Enville deserves to be distinguished. Many weeks had passed since she had last written; and the reports which, during that period, had been so generally prevalent that Mr. Edward Fitzosborn was the certain favourite of his uncle, and that he was at once to be the heir of Henhurst and the husband of Caroline, had in fact caused Caroline to be as little thought of as noticed by Lady Enville. But Edward's star seemed now to be set, and thus she hailed the rising sun.

"I have no apprehension that my dearest child will not be able to distin-

guish between the adulatory but hollow attentions which your present good fortune will expose you to, and the affectionate expressions of genuine love. You will not confound this paper, which brings you the warmest congratulations from all of the name of Enville, with the many others that you will receive on the present occasion, and which deserve not to be remembered beyond the moment in which they are read. You must also give us credit, my dear Caroline, for the sagacity of our predictions. Did I not always foretell that you would be the heiress of Henhurst? Could it be otherwise when your virtues were under the daily observation of so good and so discerning a man as Mr. Fitzosborn? I believe nothing of the rumour that you owe his immediate declaration in your favour to his disappointment in the character of Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn; probably he always knew him better than we any of us did. What a complete hypocrite! It is really horrible to think of such depravity! How he can show his

face any where, is my astonishment. A coward! I am sure, my dear Caroline, you have blushed for the degeneracy of so near a relation; but it can reflect no disgrace upon you. I can scarcely expect to be believed, except by one who so well knows my scrupulous veracity, when I tell you there are people who vindicate him. Mr. Beaumont, whom you so wisely refused, is amongst the number: but though he is a man of so large a fortune, and so well descended, he is a man of very narrow notions. They will have it, that there is more courage in braving the opinion of the world in the performance of a duty, than in putting a life to the hazard. What nonsense! And that whether he is innocent or guilty with respect to Miss Evelyn, (who would have thought that she could have so demeaned herself?) the killing her brother, or being killed himself, would not have mended the matter. And I can assure you such reasoning so upholds him, that he walks about with as much effrontery as if he had done every thing that a man of

honour ought. If such doctrines prevail, there will be an end of all society. What is it that people will not do and say to each other when they are no longer afraid of being challenged for it? I am sure I shall never forgive this bad Edward for the distress that he has brought upon the poor Evelyns. You know how much we owe them. Every thing that Charles has, or looks to have, depends upon Lord Evelyn; and when I think that it was Charles who introduced Edward into the family, I am half distracted. But this, however, I must say, that poor, dear Lady Evelyn, never did instil a proper pride into her daughters, and so the matter is the less to be wondered at. Charles is going on very well. How different his little misfortunes, or call them mistakes, to the steady unworthiness of Edward, who really cannot blush for his faults, as they are! Charles will rejoice in your good fortune, so indeed do we all. All, did I say? No, there is one exception: my poor Pynsynt. He trembles lest

there should now be less hope for him than ever; but I endeavour to keep up his spirits. So constant and so disinterested a passion as his, will not ultimately go without its reward. You see how little the *sober* young men are to be depended upon. Edward has cured me for ever of my taste for sober young men. I hope your uncle will trust you with me in town next winter; and then, my dear, if you can find a more worthy or more constant lover than Pynsynt, you shall have my consent to take him. My lord and the girls join me in all manner of kindnesses. If Mr. Fitzosborn will do us the favour to accept our best compliments, pray present them to him.

“Ever yours,
HARRIET ENVILLE.”

This disjointed rhapsody, this medley of affected feeling and real insensibility, disgusted at once and amused Caroline. It astonished Mr. Fitzosborn, who could not conceive the mixture of shallowness

and art that it betrayed; and he looked with still greater admiration on Caroline, when he saw the purity and truth that she had preserved amidst such examples of duplicity and depravity. This letter had the still happier effect of rekindling in the mind of Mr. Fitzosborn some sparks of his former good opinion of Edward. In mere contradiction to Lady Enville, he sought to see his conduct in the most favourable light possible, and he could not but allow, that the character which she wholly condemned must have some merit in it. Caroline received another letter upon the present occasion, which she did not dare to communicate to her uncle; it was from her father, and he thus wrote.

“Forbidden as I have been on the most injurious suppositions, and in the haughtiest and most authoritative tone, to hold any communication with my own child, I am not such a monster as to be insensible to the good that has befallen

her, nor sufficiently master of myself to forbear telling her so. No, my Caroline, the desolated heart of your poor father has never known a real joy since you were snatched from his eyes, till he learnt, from common fame learnt it, (how reconcile you this to filial duty?) that the first wish of his heart, the exaltation of his child, was accomplished. How many sacrifices have I made to attain this one point! and for which I am branded with the imputation of having abandoned my child. I abandoned her indeed, but it was to better hopes and higher fortunes than I had to give. To secure her happiness I have deprived myself of her society: nor do I complain of the latter, since I have so fully accomplished the former. Accept, my dearest Caroline, my most sincere congratulations: be not led away by the misrepresentations even of one whom you must undoubtedly consider as your best friend. Our little account will sometime be settled; and that so satisfactorily, that you will have rea-

son to acknowledge the prudence as well as the affection with which I am,

“ Ever yours,

“ A. FITZOSBORN.”

While the good sense of Caroline was offended by the meanness and hypocrisy of this letter, her heart was not wholly untouched by the professions of fatherly regard which it contained, and still more by its freedom from reproach on a point of her own conduct to which she could not reconcile herself. She was happy that the letter required no answer, and that her disobedience to her uncle's will extended no farther than to having read it.

CHAP. XIII.

THE first use that Caroline made of the affluence to which she was restored, was to renew her engagement with Mrs. Edward Fitzosborn, with whom it was her earnest wish to become acquainted; but she feared that Mr. Fitzosborn's prejudices against this lady were not to be shaken, and while it was evidently and avowedly his wish that the son should be forgotten, she lost all hope that he would suffer her to be known to the mother. Yet Caroline languished to have some friend of her own sex in whom she could confide, and with whom she could communicate. In the mother and sisters of Edward she believed that she might have found such friends: from them, too, she might hope to learn truly something of him, of his pursuits, of his happiness, of his projects; as to all of which she was now in profound ignorance. It is true

that she often found his name in her letters from town; but she found it there only to increase her uneasiness. All agreed in the certainty of his attachment to Miss Evelyn; in astonishment and condemnation that he had not yet married her; and in sarcasms upon a man who feared alike to fight the brother, or marry the sister.

If Caroline had her chagrins on her side, Mr. Fitzosborn had his disappointments on his. He had supposed that by opening his house to the young and the gay he had secured a number of candidates for the hand of Caroline, from which it would be no difficult task to select one equally acceptable to himself and his niece. He was astonished to find that not one young man presented himself that he could with patience have seen the husband of Caroline. He had abundance of proposals, it is true, for the heiress, from whence he could have formed settlements as splendid and lucrative as his heart, or a much more mercenary heart than his, could have wished; but

he saw not one young man who realized his idea of a lover worthy of the beauty and the virtues of his Caroline. All were so taken up with themselves, so careless of others, so confident of success, so apparently indifferent whether they attained it, that Mr. Fitzosborn was indeed convinced that the "age of gallantry" was gone. If from the manners he proceeded to the scrutiny of the heart and the principles, he had there an equal disappointment; He found their good qualities confined to a lazy good nature, which, while it tolerated every folly and every vice, reserved all its moral acumen for virtue, and a kind of bastard benevolence, which gave to charity what it denied to justice, without effort, without discrimination, or self-denial. For principles he vainly sought. He heard, indeed, of what belonged to "the gentleman," and the "man of honour;" but he found that riot and misrule might consist with the one, and servility and time-serving with the other, which, residing in the heart, displayed itself in

the action. Of religion, he found not a trace. It was not even assumed as the motive for any one virtue, or allowed as a restraint upon any one vice. For the church, indeed, he heard warm advocates; but for God and the religion of Christ, not one.

"Are all men of the present age," said he to Caroline, "like these?"

"Not *all*," said Caroline, with a sigh.

"Why, child, at this rate you must go unmarried to your grave. It is not colder than such lovers as these."

"My dear uncle," said Caroline, smiling, "marriage is now a matter of calculation and arrangement, not of love. Now you and I do not like such marriages: do let me remain your little nun, and let us cease to trouble ourselves with the thoughts of matrimony."

"Caroline, you *must* marry; and you must marry a man who loves you, and who is worthy of you. Ill as I think of the human kind, I still believe that such an one is to be had, and I will never rest till I have found him; but as to these

snow-souled automatons we'll have none of them."

To this decision Caroline gave a very hearty concurrence; but her assent was not quite so prompt, when, in a few days afterwards, Mr. Fitzosborn said to her, "Caroline, will you allow Mr. Beaumont to visit me?"

"Allow, my dear uncle! what a word!"

"Certainly your lovers do not use you to such a style of deference," replied he gayly; "yet perhaps they may have in their hearts as much submission to your will as myself: for the fact is, Mr. Beaumont *must* be allowed to come to Henhurst."

"It would be strange indeed," returned Caroline, "if I should make any objection to any guest whatever, whom you wished to see in this house."

"But, child," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "you look very grave: a smiling assent is alone of any value."

"Indeed, sir," said Caroline, "I do not know that I have any thing to do with either giving or withholding my as-

sent—your pleasure is the whole in this matter. Mr. Beaumont's visit can be nothing to me."

"Then," said Mr. Fitzosborn, playfully taking her hand, "give me this ring. It is no longer yours," added he, half drawing it from her finger.

"I have not yet lost my right to it," said Caroline very seriously, and replacing the ring.

"Give me one smile, Caroline," said her uncle: "my heart is overflowing with the most agreeable anticipations, and you damp all my joy by your grave looks."

"Oh, my uncle, forgive me! forgive this cold heart! All that delights you shall delight me, *if possible*," added she with a sigh.

"Well then, let us talk a little of Mr. Beaumont," said Mr. Fitzosborn. "He writes me word here, that having understood from various quarters that I once again see my neighbours, he presumes to hope that he may be allowed to visit Henhurst for a few days; and then,

like a flatterer as he is, he talks of the pleasant hours that he remembers in his childhood when he visited Henhurst with his father, and how he shall delight in paying his respects to his father's friend : but he says not a word of the niece of his father's friend, so you need not be frightened, child."

Caroline had never seen her uncle so gay ; but she too plainly understood the nature of his happy anticipations to be gay in consequence. Yet she strove to smile, to be pleased, to trifle : yet often she looked upon the ring, and said to herself, " It is not yet forfeited."

" Describe Mr. Beaumont to me," said Mr. Fitzosborn : " when I saw him, boy as he then was, he resembled more his mother than his father ; perhaps added years have better given the resemblance that I should have preferred."

Caroline drew the wished-for portrait ; and Mr. Fitzosborn cried out with increased pleasure, " Yes, yes ! he is like his father ; that dark and fire-darting eye, that animation of speech and manner, are

all his father's! Did I not tell you that *all* men are not isicles?"

"Upon my word, my dear uncle," said Caroline, "I do not know you this morning. What am I to think of this predilection for fire and flame?"

"That I would have you warmed, my child," returned he: "your blood flows too slowly, your heart beats too low."

"Alas!" thought Caroline, "it is not Mr. Beaumont that can raise or quicken me."

CHAP. XIV.

MR. BEAUMONT lost no time in availing himself of Mr. Fitzosborn's gracious acceptance of his offered visit, and he was received with all the pleasure and regard that he could wish.

Such were the charms of his manners and conversation, and such appeared to be the rectitude of his feelings and the strength of his understanding, that could Caroline have forgotten the pretensions which he had once manifested, and the wishes which she knew her uncle now entertained, she would have rejoiced in such an addition to their family party. There was nothing in Mr. Beaumont's address at this time that could remind Caroline of the lover; but there was so marked a partiality to all she said and did, so much affectionate deference to her wishes and opinions, and so gay a delight when he had reason to suppose

that he had succeeded in his attempts to please her, that she could not but be aware that it depended wholly upon herself to convert so warm an admirer into whatever she chose to make him. She endeavoured so to unite kindness and reserve, as at once to appear grateful for the distinction he paid her, and to repress all hope of any return beyond that which friendship can bestow. It was difficult, however, to draw with precision the boundary line between appearances so similar as those which proceed, in a delicate female mind, from friendship or from love. While Caroline continued to smile, it was not unpardonable in Mr. Beaumont, or unreasonable in her uncle, to hope that she smiled from the complacency of reciprocal affection.

Mr. Beaumont had now been at Henhurst for nearly a week, when one morning finding himself alone with Caroline: — “ I am going to make you a very extraordinary confession,” said he, “ and to exhibit a still more extraordinary expectation: yet I am not prepared for

either anger or disappointment. May I go on?"

There was nothing in these words that could naturally lead Caroline to expect a renewed declaration of love: yet she certainly did expect it. She coloured, she hesitated—"You know, sir—I have said—I should be sorry——"

"No, my dear madam," said Mr. Beaumont, interrupting her, "you would not be sorry, I am sure, to assist me in reinstating your cousin Edward in the favour of Mr. Fitzosborn; and I am not afraid to confess to you that this was the primary object of my visit to Henhurst. So much for my confession and my expectations."

"And why," said Caroline, relieved from her embarrassment, "why should either the one or the other be extraordinary?"

"When applied to you," returned Mr. Beaumont, "I acknowledge there is nothing in either which supposes any thing beyond the common mode of action; but to what other single human

being should I dare to confess that my purpose was to deprive her of the inheritance of hundreds of thousands; or to acknowledge my expectation that she would aid me in such a project?"

"I hope," said Caroline, "there is not only one, but many human beings,—the majority of human beings, I trust,—who would be happy to assist in an act of justice; and who would be grateful to those who gave them an opportunity of doing so."

"I know not that we can strictly call this an act of justice," returned Mr. Beaumont. "Between two relations so equally connected with him, Mr. Fitzosborn has certainly a right to make his election: but having once chosen, and declared his choice, the motive on which he recalls it ought to be unequivocal and established."

"My uncle," replied Caroline, "believes he acts on such a motive."

"The unworthiness of the person chosen?" said Mr. Beaumont. "But how is his unworthiness established?"

Not, surely, in the opinion of Mr. Fitzosborn, by a refusal to break at once the laws of his country and his God? By refusing to take the life of a fellow creature, or to lose his own? It is time, my dear Miss Fitzosborn, that maxims so barbarous, so unchristian, should be discouraged; that false honour should be distinguished from true. *He* is the man of courage that braves disgrace in the performance of his duty, not he who cowardly flies to death to escape shame. Edward is this man; and he deserves rather a statue to be erected to his heroism, than that he should be branded with cowardice."

"My uncle," said Caroline, in a tremulous voice, "does not object cowardice to Edward."

"I did believe as much," said Mr. Beaumont.—"There is another charge; and, unfortunately, one that he cannot be exonerated from while he wraps himself up in silence and mystery. But that Edward should be at once a seducer of female innocence, and the man who em-

braces disgrace rather than crime; I cannot believe; and it is the duty of candour, of Christian charity, in this case to reason from what is known to that which is concealed; to believe that the same fountain cannot send forth sweet and bitter water; nor that Edward can be at one and the same time a Christian martyr, and a villain."

The bright glow of pleasure that lighted up the countenance of Caroline, on so animated a defence of the character of the man whose virtues she so highly prized, might have revealed the secret of her heart to Mr. Beaumont, had he at that moment had any attention but for the cause he was advocating.

"No, my dear madam," continued he, "the thing is impossible. Struck with this impossibility, when first the gossiping world conveyed to my ears the painful tale, I sought the intimate acquaintance of a man whom I considered as the example and ornament of his age. So high was his reputation before this period for all that dignifies human na-

ture, that I had long desired the honour of his friendship: but our walks in life were different; and, (but here I was probably mistaken,) I thought I saw a reluctance in Edward to admit me to any intimacy. I would not obtrude myself; but when, unfortunately, something of support and countenance were wanted, I could no longer be restrained by any notion of etiquette or form. I owed it to my fellow creatures to bear a public testimony of approbation to a conduct fraught with so many temporal and eternal advantages, and which only wants to be regarded as *true honour* to be established on the ruins of that sanguinary usurper, to whom so many victims are daily sacrificed. I went directly to my point. I left my card at Mr. Edward Fitzosborn's chambers, enclosed in a paper, on which I had written these words: 'Mr. Beaumont aspires to the honour of an acquaintance, and he presumes to add, to the *friendship* of a man who has dared, with a heroism so genuine, to be the example of the age in which

he lives. If Mr. Fitzosborn should consider Mr. Beaumont's pretensions as too high, yet he flatters himself that Mr. Fitzosborn will not wholly disappoint him. What do you think, my dear madam, of my boldness? Was your relation too condescending in granting me *all* that I had so confidently asked; in allowing me to become his friend?"

"I think, sir," said Caroline, with the smile of an angel, while an unheeded tear strayed down her cheek, "you did honour to yourself and to human nature."

"Well then, my dear madam," said Mr. Beaumont, with an eye sparkling with delight, "from this hour Mr. Fitzosborn and I have been scarcely asunder; and I can now pronounce, on my own knowledge, that he well deserves the character for every worthy quality which he had obtained: that his heart and his understanding are the repositories of all that adorn the gentleman, and all that discriminates the Christian. He is at once acute and mild; at once

spirited and temperate ; tremblingly alive to every affection, master of every passion. No, my dear madam, we must not suffer such a man to be branded by the mark of disgrace, to be beggared by the mistakes of prejudice ; we must restore the rightful heir to Henhurst, even at the cost of its lovely heiress."

"To this design," said Caroline eagerly, "I will set my foot even so far as who goes farthest."

"And may I seal our compact on this fair hand?" said Mr. Beaumont, gently raising the not reluctant hand of Caroline to his lips.

CHAP. XV.

MR. BEAUMONT retired from this conference with a heart overflowing with the most delightful hopes, and more than ever in love with Caroline, who had gone beyond his most daring expectations in the alacrity and disinterestedness with which she had bound herself to the cause of Edward: a disinterestedness which he would have found still more pure had he penetrated the secret of her heart. But of this he had no suspicion; for as he thought he had a proof that Edward was not attached to Caroline, so had it never occurred to him that Caroline was attached to Edward. Her former rejection of himself he imputed to some entanglement with Mr. Pynsynt, from whence, as he now believed her disengaged, he indulged himself in dreams of every happiness that

auspicious fortune and mutual love can bestow.

Caroline, on her side, was scarcely less pleased. To restore Edward to fortune and to favour was the first wish of her heart; and to find that she, who was to lose so much by such a restoration, was considered by a man of Mr. Beaumont's merit as the fit instrument by which to accomplish it, so agreeably and so justifiably flattered her self-love, that she scarcely remembered, in the whole course of her life, a more delightful moment.

Let it be remembered that it was by "calling things by their right names" that Caroline was enabled to accomplish so complete a victory over every mercenary, every personal consideration.

Mr. Beaumont's next attack was upon Mr. Fitzosborn: but to subdue prejudice he found would be a more difficult task than to influence generosity.

If the mystery that hung over the conduct of Edward gave room for the operation of Mr. Beaumont's candour, in

the *possibility* it allowed of innocence, it served equally, in the more severe mind of Mr. Fitzosborn, as the probable covert for guilt: if Mr. Beaumont argued, that the man who preferred his duty in one instance, to his reputation in the world, could not be a villain in another, Mr. Fitzosborn rebutted the conclusion, by supposing Edward at once a seducer and a coward: if Mr. Beaumont brought the tenour of Edward's whole life in evidence against such a solution of the enigma, Mr. Fitzosborn called in hypocrisy on the other side; and, at length, knitting his brows, he said—"I have heard you, sir, hitherto with more patience than the subject deserves; we must have done with it. I have not acted but upon what I consider nearly as demonstration; I shall not alter my decisions upon a possibility: and I must tell you, sir, that this so eager endeavour to restore probable guilt to my favour, to the exclusion of established virtue, astonishes me in a man of your reputed

probity, or I might have said of common gallantry."

"I understand you, sir," returned Mr. Beaumont; "but it is not my insensibility to that virtue, but the just homage that I pay to its superiority, that has encouraged me to undertake a cause which must indeed have been hopeless without such a support. If I had believed Miss Fitzosborn less than an angel, I should not have entered your house with a hope of engaging her to assist me in disinheriting herself: but I conceived that I had a certainty of finding Miss Fitzosborn an advocate for suffering merit, though at the expense of her own interest. I have not been mistaken: she exceeds all that I had imagined of generosity and disinterestedness: that which you have refused to me I still hope will be granted to her. Her pleadings must be irresistible."

"Your hope is ill founded," replied Mr. Fitzosborn; "I can resist Caroline when Caroline pleads against herself."

“ My dear sir,” said Mr. Beaumont, suffer me to open my whole heart to you : that heart has long been in the possession of your lovely niece. Before she had the happiness of being under your protection I offered it to her, with all I had beside to give : the offering was rejected ; but from such a cause as, I am persuaded, no longer exists. In presuming to offer myself as your guest, my first purpose was to endeavour to reinstate my friend Edward in your favour : my next, to lay my fortune and my person at the feet of Miss Fitzosborn. It is not the heiress I seek, it is the woman that I love ; but with this woman, all lovely, all excellent as she is, I could scarcely be happy if she brought me that fortune which I acknowledge (forgive me, my dear sir, if I am impertinent) I consider as the right of another. Give, then, your estate to Edward, but give the beloved Caroline to me. I am rich enough to gratify, and more than gratify, all her wishes ; and she is dearer to me in the virtuous poverty to which she has re-

duced herself, than she would be as empress of the globe."

"Miss Fitzosborn," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, with a stately air, "is not poor: whether she be my heiress or not, she will bring to whomsoever she honours with her hand a fortune not unworthy of any man."

"I see," said Mr. Beaumont, "that I am taking liberties, and that you think so, sir; but, pray forgive my frankness, I please myself with thinking that I am speaking to a father. I cannot surely have been misinformed as to a transaction which places Miss Fitzosborn's filial merits so high."

"Whatever you may have heard, sir," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, "you may be assured that my niece is at once affluent and independent. She is the probable heiress of Henhurst, since her being so depends upon her perseverance in all that is right: she is the certain possessor of thirty thousand pounds, even if she should deviate into all that is wrong."

"I am not," replied Mr. Beaumont, "so romantic as to like a woman the worse for having thirty thousand pounds; but I should certainly prefer her who had sacrificed such a sum to the demand of duty, to her who had retained it at the expense of duty."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "the moral tact of my niece is high enough to satisfy even your idea of excellence; and if you can prevail with her to give you her hand, you need not shrink from the riches it will bring with it. It is honest wealth, it will wear well."

"Have I your permission, sir," said Mr. Beaumont, with eagerness, "to try to gain so high a prize?"

"Not only my permission," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, "but my earnest wishes for your success. I will speak as plainly as yourself. To see you the husband of Caroline has been the first wish of my heart since I heard of you, and knew her. It might have been supposed that I should have wished to unite the only two competitors for my property that I

could at all think worthy of it; but my thoughts flow not in the common channel. A marriage of negotiation and arrangement is, in my mind, a kind of profanation. Caroline, when I first knew her, was richer than I wished the wife of my heir to be; perhaps the stock from which she immediately sprang did not please me. I wished not to restore, by means of the daughter, the birthright that the father had not scrupled to sell; I had prejudices to her mother's family: in a word, I had my reasons why I did not, while Edward was worthy of my care, wish Caroline the wife of Edward: I can still less wish it now. To an alliance with you I can have no such objections: you are, it is true, richer than I should have wished the husband of the heiress of Henhurst to be: I do not love cumulative wealth; but where all the rest is as it should be, this may be overlooked."

"Not overlooked, my dear sir," said Mr. Beaumont; "let it be removed."

"No more," said Mr. Fitzosborn, frowning: "I must tell you, sir, that

this indiscreet, this incomprehensible intercession, has already lessened you in my opinion; if it is persisted in, it may change it altogether. But," continued he, in a softer tone, "what hopes have you of success with Caroline? what reason has she given you to think that the cause of her former rejection is removed?"

"I know that the alleged cause does not exist," returned Mr. Beaumont: "my hopes of success are, however, perhaps founded upon vanity. They certainly spring from the complacency, the graciousness with which I am at present honoured by Miss Fitzosborn."

"If Caroline is the good girl I take her to be," replied Mr. Fitzosborn, "you will find no difficulty; but I am afraid that the best of women, in these matters, are not determined by merit."

Mr. Beaumont acknowledged the compliment with a bow, but it planted a dagger in his heart; something of the real truth flashed upon him. The unnecessary exposition that Mr. Fitzosborn

had made of his disapprobation of an union between Caroline and Edward; his sturdy adherence to his opinion of Edward's unworthiness; his absolute refusal to admit of any intercession in his favour, awakened a suspicion that he might not only condemn him as a man, but dread him as the object of Caroline's favour. On the other hand, if her fervent desire to restore him to affluence and the affection of his uncle might be supposed to argue a partiality on her part, the avowal and indulgence of his love for another, which would follow such a restoration, seemed to say that it could not be promoted by the woman who wished to secure him to herself. The disinterestedness that could resign the goods of fortune to the pleadings of justice and compassion, Mr. Beaumont had given Caroline credit for; the greater abandonment of self in the resignation of a favoured lover to the arms of a rival, he had not yet learnt to believe possible. Upon this impossibility he still retained, though not with so firm a grasp as be-

fore, his hopes of succeeding with Caroline.

On Mr. Beaumont's going from Mr. Fitzosborn, he was met by Caroline. "What hopes," cried she, eagerly, "of success?"

"Success depends upon you, my dear madam," said Mr. Beaumont, yielding to an impulse of the moment that he could not resist. "Give this dear hand to me, oh! lovely and beloved Caroline! and with the other you shall present Henhurst to Edward."

"Are these," said Caroline, turning pale, "the terms on which my uncle will restore Edward to his favour?"

"I will not deceive you," said Mr. Beaumont; "Mr. Fitzosborn will listen to *no* terms: his rejection of Edward is absolute; but he would give me his lovely niece, and with her all his possessions. Do you but ratify the gift, and it shall depend wholly on your will who shall retain Henhurst."

"I cannot do this even for Edward,"

said Caroline, withdrawing her hand:

" my uncle knows that I cannot."

" *Cannot!*" repeated Mr. Beaumont.

" Oh! do not utter so killing a word! I am not hateful to you?"

" Far, far from it," replied Caroline:

" your distinction honours me; your friendship is valuable to me: but I cannot be your wife."

" Then thus fall all my hopes of happiness," cried Mr. Beaumont. " I see my fate—I can urge my suit no farther. Farewell!"

Mr. Beaumont precipitately withdrew; and Caroline, surprised with the rapidity with which a matter of such moment to her happiness had been decided, scarcely believed that she was not in a dream.

Mr. Beaumont went directly to Mr. Fitzosborn, to report the final discomfiture of his hopes.

" I feared as much," said Mr. Fitzosborn; " Caroline is not yet an angel. Still the time may come when this ab-

solute *cannot* shall be qualified, but it is not yet. Are you willing to wait its arrival?"

"To the last period of my life," replied Mr. Beaumont. "If I cannot have Caroline Fitzosborn, I will die a bachelor."

"You will then do unwisely," said Mr. Fitzosborn: "I have tried the experiment; it is a forlorn one. Of all passions, the passion for self is the least gratifying: of all cares, the care for self is the most wearing. I knew not what happiness was, till my heart overflowed with tenderness for Caroline; and though the little gipsy has cost me many a pang, and will, I see, cost me many another, the constant interest that she affords my mind has given a relish to life of which I had not before a conception, and which I would not now resign for peace the most unbroken. But I hope this caution is unnecessary; I still hope to see you the husband of Caroline. I know how highly she values your virtues: she admires your talents; she likes your con-

versation: you must withdraw your claim as a lover, but you must visit here as her uncle's friend: she, too, is just now under the fancy of dying a bachelor; but I trust that I shall see you both wiser, and of course happier."

Mr. Beaumont readily acquiesced in a proposal so agreeable to his wishes; for though he now entertained not a doubt but that Caroline's affections had been given to Edward, yet as he felt assured that the affection had never been reciprocal, he flattered himself that time, Edward's continued attachment to another, and the wishes of Mr. Fitzosborn, would lead to the accomplishment of all that he desired. He was, however, lost in astonishment, when he compared the attractions of Miss Evelyn and Caroline, at the unworthiness of Edward's choice, and never felt less disposed to acquit him of folly, or even of crime, than at the moment when he owed his own prospect of happiness to his being guilty either of one or the other.

Mr. Beaumont, though rejected by the niece, did not quit the house of the uncle; and he continued to be treated by both with very distinguished marks of regard.

Mr. Fitzosborn took no farther notice to Caroline of her rejection of a lover so acceptable to him, than a half serious demand of the ring; to which Caroline made reply only by turning the diamond to her uncle, and remarking, "It has not yet lost its lustre."

CHAP. XVI.

WHILE these things were going on at Henhurst, the career of Mr. Fitzosborn in vice, folly, and extravagance, was coming to a period in London. To satisfy his insatiable thirst for expense, the depredations that he had made on the fortunes of his daughter were not the only nefarious means to which he had had recourse: to meet the consequence of such deviations from integrity had been the imperious and irresistible impulse under which he had acted when he ventured to commit so daring a robbery on his child, as was his last transaction with Caroline. The relief had been short-lived; and had led so far into the discovery of the means by which it had been effected, as had begun to stamp his name with infamy. The story spread: it was confirmed by innumerable circumstances; the disclosure became com-

plete, and Mr. Fitzosborn found himself the object of universal reprobation and contempt. Had he still been able to have assembled his censurers around his festive board; could his table have been spread with its former delicacy; could his wines have flowed with the former copiousness; these disgraceful rumours might have been stifled in their birth, for few would have chosen to have believed that the man who could give such dinners was a villain. But his resources were stopped; his credit was at an end: and after in vain struggling for a few weeks to maintain his place in society a little longer, he beheld an execution in his house, and retiring to his closet, swallowed laudanum. No sooner had he thus consummated the work of self-destruction, than the image of an hereafter, which he had hitherto derided, arose to his mind in all the horrors in which guilt and despair could paint it. He called for aid; he entreated for life at the expense of honour, of fortune, of all that to the virtuous makes life valuable; but he en-

treated in vain : all that medical skill could do was to suspend for a short time the final stroke. Though the immediate effects of the poison were averted, the horrors he had undergone, the shock that his constitution had received, were such, that no hopes remained of preserving his life ; his senses were already imperfect, and every hour might be his last.

The deplorable condition of her father was communicated to Caroline in the following letter from Mrs. Fitzosborn.

“ I have bad news to send you, dear Miss Fitzosborn ; but perhaps you won't think so, and to be sure nobody can wonder if you did not, for Mr. Fitzosborn has been a bad father to you, as I always told you he would, but you would not take my advice : yet it is a sad thing for a daughter to forsake her father upon his death-bed, and to let him die, calling upon her, and she not to come near him. Indeed I do not think you will do so, and therefore I have thought proper

to let you know, that the doctors say he cannot live. two days, and he says he can't die in peace except you forgive him. He should have thought of this before he took that wretched laudanum, but there's no help for all these things now. Times are sadly changed since you saw Sackville-street: an execution in the house, and I don't know what; for certainly it could not be expected that I should stay there after such sad doings; more especially as Mr. Fitzosborn would not suffer me to come near him, which is very strange and wrong. I am sure I am the sufferer, and I wish I had never been such a fool as to have married him: but that's nothing to the purpose. There are servants still in the house, and I believe you would not want for any thing if you were to come, or you might be at Lord Enville's. But all this as you please, or rather as your good uncle pleases; for without doubt you must do nothing which he does not like; I find his favour is all you have to look to. But I have done my duty in letting you know how

matters are, and that's what concerns me, for you see what comes of neglecting one's duty.

"I am, dear Miss Fitzosborn,

"Very affectionately yours,

"M. FITZOSBORN."

Caroline received from other hands the same intelligence, conveyed in a more gentle way, but all agreed in showing the indispensable call there was for her immediate attendance upon a dying and conscience-stricken parent. She hesitated not a moment to obey the call, nor did she anticipate from her uncle any opposition to the performance of a duty which appeared to her so legitimate and so urgent. What then was her astonishment and dismay when she heard him declare in the most peremptory terms, that she should not quit Henhurst, that she should never again enter those doors which shut in her father!"

"He is no parent!" cried he vehemently: "he has dissolved every tie of nature; he has violated every duty of

society: never again shall you be exposed to his machinations. Of your pardon he must be assured, for he knows that you are a Christian: to your soothing he has no right, they *ought* not to be of power to still the upbraidings of his conscience; they *cannot* have that power. You shall not be the victim of an effort which cannot avail to his consolation."

"It may, it may avail!" cried Caroline: "if it should not, yet it must be made. I cannot here, my dearest uncle, submit to your will."

"To my will," returned Mr. Fitzosborn, with increasing violence, "you must submit, or follow your own at the peril of my favour for ever."

"At the peril of your favour then let it be!" said Caroline, bursting into tears of the extremest anguish, and kissing at the same time the hands of her uncle, with an impassioned feeling which she found it impossible to restrain. "Not for all the good this world can give; not for that which my soul most

sighs for ; not for your kindest thoughts, my dear, my beloved, my revered uncle, would I knowingly, willingly forego so sacred a duty."

" And shall I suffer you," said Mr. Fitzosborn, " unprotected to expose yourself to the horrors, the dangers of the scene you so desire to rush into? Shall I so ill perform the guardianship I have assumed?"

" I am not unprotected," replied Caroline; " my reason, my conscience, and my God, are my protectors ! Oh, my uncle ! all delay is parricide : if you value my peace of mind for all my life to come, detain me not."

" Comply, I conjure you," said Mr. Beaumont, who was present at this scene, though unthought of either by Mr. Fitzosborn or Caroline : " it is the voice of an angel that pleads, it must be heard."

" Be it heard then," said Mr. Fitzosborn, in an agony ; " but oh, Caroline, return to me in safety, or the guilt of parricide will still be yours."

Caroline, though deeply affected by this intimation, was not to be shaken from her purpose.

“ I shall return, my dearest unclē,” said she, “ in safety ; be assured I shall : and from henceforward never can there be a duty more sacred to me than to stay for ever near you—there can be no second competition.”

CHAP. XVII.

CAROLINE lost not a moment in hastening her departure, and a few hours brought her to Sackville-street.

The blank silence which reigned where mirth and festivity used to resound; the strange faces that met her eye; the air of devastation that on entering the house presented itself on all sides, struck Caroline at once with grief and terror. She inquired for her father's personal servant, and at the same time attempted to go up stairs; when one of the men, who seemed to be placed in the hall to watch over the actions of all who entered the house, stopt her, and desired to know her business.

"I am going to my father," said Caroline, impressively: "a daughter is going to pay a last duty to a dying parent."

The appeal seemed irresistible ; but it was not so to the flinty heart to which it was addressed.

“ You had best wait, miss,” said the man, “ to know whether your papa is alive or dead.”

“ Detain me not, sir,” said Caroline ; “ I will not be detained !” and she rushed up stairs. The man, however, laid hold of her gown ; but on the appearance of the physician, and Mr. Fitzosborn’s servant, he let go his hold.

“ What are you doing, fellow ?” said the servant ; “ how dare you insult that lady ?” The physician at the same time giving his arm to the terrified Caroline, led her into the drawing-room ; and gave her repeated assurances that she had nothing to fear.

“ I do fear nothing,” said Caroline, “ but that I am come too late : let me see my father, let me see him while he can yet know me.”

“ The scene will be too much for you,” replied the gentleman ; “ and this act of duty will be unavailing to its object.”

"Tell me not so," said Caroline impatiently; "I must, I will see him; alive or dead, I will see him," repeated she, and made towards the door.

"Then," said the physician, "summon all your fortitude; you will have need of it: a dreadful sight awaits you."

They then approached the bed, where the poor object of Caroline's undeserved care lay writhing in all the agony of pain, and all the horrors of a too-late awakened conscience. The groan, which almost amounted to a howl, that struck the ear of Caroline, made her recoil a few steps; but the next moment she was by the side of the bed, and hanging over it. "Oh, my father, look on me!" said she, "I am come to give you comfort; I am come—"

"Are you a fiend from hell?" cried the poor wretch; "the minister of a ruined daughter's vengeance?"

"Take this, my dear father," said Caroline, holding a little cordial to his mouth, "it will do you good: it will

compose you. I am come to nurse you : all may yet be well."

"Angel of light!" said he, "what words of comfort are those? But it cannot be: you are come, I know you are come, to curse me!"

"I am come to bless you, to—"

"Forgive me!" interrupted he in a voice that penetrated her very soul; "do you say that you are come to forgive me?"

"Most truly I forgive you. Oh, endeavour to forgive yourself: perhaps a greater forgiveness than either awaits you."

"Oh, no, no, it cannot be! Hell is open before me! Away, away! Let me not drag you with me to that place of torment! Away, away!"

"Retire, for God's sake!" said the physician earnestly; "you have done all you can do. If there is a calmer interval I will again call you."

"Cannot I calm? cannot I soothe?"

"No, no: you hear his ravings, you see his agonies; the sight of you irritates

him. Retire; and, if it be possible, let him die in quietness."

The almost exhausted Caroline withdrew, and turned her trembling steps towards the drawing-room; she started on seeing it already occupied, and occupied by—Edward.

"Forgive me," said he, "for presuming once again to appear before you. I saw your carriage at the door; I knew the horrors that awaited you in this house: it was impossible not to come to you."

Caroline scarcely heard him, scarcely saw him: her whole soul was filled with the scene from which she had just escaped. She could not speak, she could not weep: she sat down, her eyes half closed, and sensible only to an oppression on her chest that seemed to threaten suffocation.

"Speak to me, my dearest cousin," said Edward; "look at me." Caroline turned her eyes upon him, but with such a gaze of vacant stupidity as frightened him.

“ Caroline! my dear Caroline! Oh, be not thus overcome!”

“ I think so!” said Caroline.

“ Think! Oh, Heavens! you do not think!” cried Edward in an agony. “ Oh, best beloved of my soul! what alienation of mind is this? Lost as you are to me, be not lost to yourself; to all those who may yet rejoice in your smiles, who may still witness your virtues.”

A deep sigh relieved the nearly bursting heart of Caroline.

“ What do you say? Who are you? Oh, Edward!”

“ Yes, it is me, it is indeed Edward!” said he: and grasping her hands, and holding first one and then the other to his heart—“ It is the wretched, the undone Edward, but not the guilty. Oh no, my Caroline! the man who loves you cannot be the villain I am supposed to be.”

Scattered as were the senses of Caroline at this moment, the words of Edward did not escape her. What she

might have said, what she might have done, cannot be told, for at this moment the physician entered the room.

"It is over!" said he: "my unhappy patient is released."

Caroline became suddenly sick. Her head dropped upon her shoulder, and for a few moments she was unconscious of existence. As soon as she could recollect herself—"My task," said she, "is over; I will return to Henhurst."

"I entreat," said Edward, "that you will not leave London without allowing yourself some rest: I shall dread the consequences of such agitation if you do."

"I cannot rest till I am again at Henhurst," said Caroline. "But is there not something more to be done? Who will take care that all that is decent, all that is proper——"

"On me shall devolve those duties," interrupted Edward; "I have a natural right to perform them as your deputy, my dear cousin. You will not deny me this privilege? you will not doubt my

vigilance, my religious performance of all that you wish to have done?"

"I do *not* doubt you," said Caroline; "nor need I explain my wishes. All of respect that a child can show a parent must be shown on this occasion."

"It shall be shown," said Edward: "be easy on that head, my dearest cousin. Every care on every point shall be taken."—Caroline bowed her head in token of thankfulness.

"Now, then, let me be gone," said she; "my uncle counts every moment of my absence."

"And does no one else count the moments of your absence?" said Edward.

"Am I not to believe that my friend Beaumont is indeed to be the happiest of men?"

"He *is* one of the happiest," returned Caroline, "in the generous feelings of his own heart. Edward, you know not, you can scarcely imagine what efforts he has made in your behalf. It is not his fault that you are not restored to the

favour of my uncle, and all its consequences."

"How ill-directed is his care!" said Edward. "He would restore me to the goods of fortune, and robs me of what is dearer to me than my life: he would gladden the present hour; he makes all future happiness impossible."

Another happy interruption spared Caroline the necessity of seeming even to hear these words. The kindly provident physician, hearing Caroline's intention to return immediately, had quitted the room, and returned at that moment followed by a servant, bringing some refreshment. He prevailed with Caroline to swallow a morsel of food, and to drink a glass of wine; and then, highly approving of her intention to remove immediately, he endeavoured to quiet Edward's fears as to the consequence of her renewed exertion, by assuring him that the air and the motion of the carriage would be of service to her, and that the sooner she was once

again in the peace and safety of home the better it would be. Edward acquiesced; and Caroline having made her acknowledgments to the physician, and reiterated her request to Edward to omit no respectful care in the charge that he had undertaken, she suffered him to take her hand, and to lead her, accompanied by her maid servant, to her carriage.

When Caroline arrived at the first stage of her journey the evening was far advanced; and in consideration to the fatigue of her servants, and the alarm that she might perhaps occasion to her uncle if she were to arrive at Henhurst at an undue hour, she resolved to remain at the inn all night. To her it could not be a night of rest; the death-bed scene that she had witnessed, the dying wretch a parent, was for ever before her eyes: nor durst she trust her mind with the reflexions to which it gave rise. Yet had she not the power to think of any thing else: the words of Edward, which would at another moment have seemed so important to her, scarcely

rested on her memory; the sounds of her father's voice, the ghastly turn of his eye, his irrational words, his torturing anticipations, alone found a place there. It was in vain that she closed her eyes; she had no power to exclude from her imagination the image of her father: in vain was she conscious that all was still around her; his voice still sounded in her ears. Terrified, harrassed, and afflicted, Caroline rose early, and pursued her journey; and so lost was she in the sadness of her meditations, that it was not till the rising woods of the park showed how near she was to home, that she recollected the duties that awaited her there. To calm the affectionate apprehensions of her uncle, and to indemnify him for what he had suffered in her absence, now became the object of her first attention. She endeavoured to recall a degree of composure to her countenance, to arrange her thoughts, and to subdue her feelings; and she had so far succeeded, that when she appeared before her uncle he was more delighted

by a return so much earlier than he had hoped, than alarmed by the ravages that the agitation which she had undergone in the few hours of her absence had imprinted on her countenance.

"My child, my darling child!" cried Mr. Fitzosborn, "this is good, this is kind of you. I hope you will now be satisfied that you have done your duty?"

"I have no farther duty to perform," said Caroline, solemnly: "the scene is closed for ever!"

"Closed for ever!" repeated Mr. Fitzosborn, and seized with an universal trembling—"My unhappy brother!—But you saw him, you forgave him?"

"I saw him——" said Caroline; it was all she could say: all that she had seen, all that she had heard pressed upon her imagination, and stopt her utterance.

"You saw him! and was that all?"

"Oh no, not all!" cried the agonized Caroline: "but ask me no questions. Oh, my uncle! spare yourself and me

the repetition of the horrors I have witnessed since we parted."

Mr. Fitzosborn seemed for a moment stricken dumb by the images of horror which these words presented to his imagination. He sat with his eyes wildly staring, his lips quivering, and every limb in agitation. At length cried he, "Caroline, take care of yourself; I must retire. Such a separation of soul and body as I perceive you have witnessed, is too horrible to be thought of: I must have recourse to devotion to calm my mind. With these words he left the room; and Mr. Beaumont, who had been no uninterested spectator of this scene, now applied all his care to the soothing of Caroline, in whose countenance he too plainly read all that she had undergone, and all that she still continued to feel.

CHAP. XVIII.

A FEW days, however, restored both the uncle and the niece to their wonted calmness; and Mr. Fitzosborn wished to hear, and Caroline was able to relate, the outlines of what had occurred in Sackville-street: neither, however, did his inquiries nor her information penetrate the chamber of death. A sacred dread seemed to pervade the minds of both on this part of the story. But the kind attentions of the physician, the unlooked-for appearance of Edward, the duties that he had taken upon himself, all these were detailed with exactness, and heard with interest. And now it was that the true and full meaning, and the only meaning that could attach to Edward's vehement and undisguised professions of regard, first struck with all its force on the mind of Caroline. On

relating to her uncle his so unexpected appearance, and the kind solicitude which had produced it, she thought that she was about to relate all that had passed : but she found that she had involuntarily suppressed every word that he had uttered beyond his first address to her ; and in having suppressed, she acknowledged herself conscious of all that it could be meant to convey.

“ I had hoped,” said her uncle, “ that you would never have seen Edward more. And how grateful am I to Providence, that you did see him ! If vehemence could have turned filial duty from its purpose, I had prevented your journey to town ; and now I would not for a thousand worlds but that you had been there. How limited are our views ! how mistaken our wishes ! ”

As Mr. Fitzosborn made this reflexion, he was meditating the most powerful argument to lead Caroline to accept of the hand and heart of Mr. Beaumont, as the only means, in his opinion, to secure her happiness ; forgetting in his

practice the blindness and error which he had but the moment before admitted in his theory.

"You see, my dearest Caroline," continued he, "how inefficient a protector a poor old recluse like myself must be to a young and lovely creature like you. I might indeed shut you up here, and watch over you as a miser does over his gold; but this would be safety, not usefulness. Your heart and your understanding must be in action; they can only be advantageously or safely active under the protection of a man whom you love and respect. Such a man *ought* Mr. Beaumont to be. Caroline, lessen not yourself in my opinion by telling me he is not so."

"I had hoped, my dearest uncle," returned Caroline, "that this subject had been at rest for ever. I admire, I respect, I esteem Mr. Beaumont, but I *cannot* be his wife!"

"And *why* cannot?" urged Mr. Fitzosborn: "are not admiration, respect,

and esteem, sufficient grounds to build matrimonial affection on?"

"Not," said Caroline, hesitating and colouring, "not with a consciousness — a preference — the remains of a preference —"

"For one," said Mr. Fitzosborn, sternly, "for one whom you can neither esteem nor respect."

"Pardon me," said Caroline, "I do esteem, I do respect the object of my preference. The clouds which hang over his conduct may one day be done away; I will await the issue: but I promise you, if ever I cease to respect and esteem Edward, I will give my hand to Mr. Beaumont."

"And what will avail to you even the manifestation of Edward's probity, when he has given his heart, with all its propensities, good or bad, to another?"

"I have confessed," said Caroline, in the deepest confusion, "that my heart was a free-will offering. Its affections are dependent upon the virtues, not

upon the inclinations, of its possessor."

"And dare you suppose that you can allow yourself even in the *secret* love for the husband of another woman, and yet be innocent?"

"No," returned Caroline; "I am not the dupe of so false, so dangerous a sentiment. I know I am accountable for the *allowed* inclinations of my heart as strictly as I am for my actions. But Edward is not married; we have heard him declare that he does not design to marry. I know you will call the soundness of my mind in question when I acknowledge that I do not believe that Miss Evelyn is the object of Edward's affections. But oh, my uncle! suffer me, I beseech you, a little to await the unravelling this mysterious connexion: if it issue in the degradation, or marriage of Edward, I resign myself to your will."

"You say you do not believe that Miss Evelyn is the object of Edward's affections," said Mr. Fitzosborn; "do

you mean to imply that she has never been the toy of his fancy?"

"*I do*," said Caroline, blushing: "if Miss Evelyn has *any* rights over Edward, I will acknowledge myself mistaken; I will abjure my present sentiments; I will adopt those with which you wish to inspire me."

"And you promise this?" said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"Faithfully," said Caroline; "and I will perform what I have promised."

"With this promise then I will rest satisfied," replied her uncle; "but remember, Caroline, that more than your *happiness* is involved in the engagement that you have made."

The heart of Caroline fully subscribed to this truth; but as she had been emboldened by the knowledge that she believed she had gained of the state of Edward's affections to avow the constancy of her own, so resting alike upon the truth of his professions of love and his integrity, she did not fear the consequence of a promise that could bind her

to nothing while Edward was not a villain. She was not aware that the word *innocence* might bear with her and Edward a different meaning; and impossible as she found it to form any hypothesis by which she could reconcile his connexion with Miss Evelyn, and the love professed to herself, with the extended sense in which she alone understood the term, yet conceiving that it could have only *one* signification, she relied so undoubtingly upon his honour, as from this period to admit the conviction that a time would arrive when he would be able to clear up the mystery to her perfect satisfaction. In the vindication of his character would be involved the justification of the partiality which she entertained for him, and this partiality she now indulged without any humiliating regret. Hers was no longer an unreturned affection, it was no longer the offspring of her own mind; it was the grateful sense of the excellence of a man who had told her she was to him the dearest of human creatures, and

had told her so at a moment when it was impossible that he should utter the accents of falsehood ; when he could hope nothing from such a declaration, and which had indeed been extorted from him only by despair. She no longer found any contrariety between her wishes and her reason. To await the raising the veil which Edward asserted obscured his integrity she found at once to be consonant to the feelings of her heart, and the reasoning of her understanding ; at once to be the forbearance of affection, and the tribute of justice : assured that she was right, she did not fear to be steady ; and having fully explained her intentions to her uncle, she felt that she had attained the privilege of acting in conformity with them.

Mr. Fitzosborn's renewed attack, however, in favour of Mr. Beaumont, convinced Caroline that the latter had not so entirely given up his hopes of success as she had been led to believe ; and she was aware that the freedom and kindness of her intercourse with him might nourish

an expectation, which she was more than ever inclined to discourage. From this time, therefore, she endeavoured as much as was in her power, without a harshness of which her nature was incapable, to convince him that he had nothing to hope either from time or importunity; and Mr. Beaumont so plainly understood her, that in a fortnight after Caroline's return from London Mr. Beaumont left Henhurst.

CHAP. XIX.

THE uncle and niece thus once more left to themselves, Caroline flattered herself that they should resume the course of life which in the earlier part of her residence at Henhurst had been so agreeable to her: never had her mind been more fitted to enjoy the calm and rational delight of literary instruction, or her heart more alive to the affectionate and benevolent feelings. If she were saddened by the scenes she had witnessed in London, and saddened she was at times to a degree of depression beyond all that she had ever felt from any other occurrence in her life, she was also relieved from the unceasing fear of some sudden evil which had oppressed her during the lifetime of a parent, from whose conduct she had every thing to apprehend. Dreadful as had been the passage, this evil was pas-

sed; and where she durst not presume to judge, she endeavoured to hope. Possessed of the invaluable secret of Edward's affections, her thoughts imaged the happy prospective that restored him at once to fortune, reputation, and love. She felt the self-complacency which a consciousness of having done justice to calumniated merit spreads over the mind; and she took some credit to herself that even his supposed attachment to another had not shaken her opinion of his worth, or slackened her efforts in his favour.

Thus satisfied with herself, and confident of the integrity of her lover, she thought more of the shipwreck that she had escaped, than of the storms that she had undergone; and hope, springing on the elastic wings of youth, carried her forward to the consummation of all that she wished.

In this happy state of mind, she thought only of administering to the happiness of Mr. Fitzosborn, and of communicating her own to all around her; and her uncle had soon unequivocal

proofs, that the want of means to give, was with Caroline the only limit to her bounty. To relieve distress was easy; but to content the wishes of her uncle she found a more difficult task than she had expected. Mr. Fitzosborn was far from partaking of the confidence and hopes of Caroline. His projects were disappointed—his prospects were obscure: if he doubted not but that the confirmed ill conduct of Edward would give him a right to claim Caroline's promise in favour of Mr. Beaumont, he durst not assure himself that in fulfilling this promise she would find happiness. That she *ought* so to find it he was persuaded; and his mind became fretted from the fear that she should prove unequal to the task of reconciling her happiness to her duty. Caroline had, however, so perfectly established her character with her uncle, that although this fear was sufficiently strong to interrupt his peace, it had no power to check the tide of his affections. They flowed uninterruptedly toward Caroline;

and were manifested by every act of kindness, or word of love, that the human heart can conceive, or the human organs utter. Still he wished her, in one particular, different from what she was; and the life of monotony and seclusion that she was to lead at Henhurst, appeared to him unfavourable to the change in her sentiments which he so earnestly desired. He had endeavoured to detain Mr. Beaumont; he was angry that he had not been able to do so, and thought that he scarcely deserved the blessing that he appeared to slight. In his eagerness to promote the happiness of two people, who only of all his fellow creatures he could truly be said to love, he became unjust to them both, and uneasy to himself. Like the comforters of Job, his argument was true but his conclusion was false; and poor Caroline was the victim of his want of logic.

Instead of the uniform succession of instructive study, or active benevolence, in which she had hoped the hours were to pass, Mr. Fitzosborn was never at rest

while Caroline was so. For a few weeks she took shelter under the first habits of her mourning ; but these once passed, Mr. Fitzosborn would admit of no excuse for her remaining at home. The perpetual recurrence of visiting and being visited was renewed. He wished her to show herself wherever gayety and amusement were to be found. He was jealous of the hours of retirement, and suspected that every moment which she could steal from the hurry in which he wished her to live, would be given to the remembrance of Edward. Nothing could be less selfish on his part than this conduct. In pursuing what he believed to be the only road of happiness and virtue to Caroline, he became weary of his existence : yet never did saint or fanatic advance more intrepidly to martyrdom than did Mr. Fitzosborn sacrifice every comfort of his life to oppose the phantom of Caroline's possible degradation, which existed wholly in his own imagination. In vain did she plead for his quiet and her own. In such entreaties

he saw nothing but a wish to indulge in the reveries of an unworthy passion; and he drove her from him for whole days together, though he never parted from her without a tear, and counted every moment of her absence with a sigh.

Caroline, who penetrated the motive for so unexpected a procedure, felt her spirits sink equally under the suspicions of her uncle, and the mode of life to which these suspicions subjected her. Observing, however, his readiness to forego her society, she became emboldened to propose a plan which had long engaged her wishes, but which she would never have proceeded to execute if the gratification of her uncle must have been the price of her own.

One morning, as he was sitting by her, during her breakfast, which the engagement of the preceding evening had delayed to a late hour. "My dear uncle," said she with her usual frankness of character, "what a life of inanity do you compel me to lead! How spiritless, how useless am I become!

Kind as you are, I cannot believe that by thus forcing me into dissipation you seek *only* my *amusement*. I know it is a higher aim to which you sacrifice (forgive my vanity,) the pleasure that you used to take in my company; but indeed you mistake the means to attain it. Is the suspension of every reasoning faculty favourable to the exertion of reason? Is the lassitude of exhausted nerves a power to be opposed to the force of inclination? Can dissipation that wearies me, frivolity that disgusts me, render me less alive to the charms of regulated cheerfulness and sterling intellect? Can I find in the flatteries, the homage of a promiscuous crowd to whom I am indifferent, any compensation for the intercourse and partiality of real affection? It is not, my dear uncle, in the contemplation of deformity that we lose the sense of beauty. The image that you wish to banish from my mind may be displaced, but can never be forgotten. In practising my own mind to the active exertion of every virtue, I may find

a succedaneum for the loss of that which adorns another; but in lessening myself in my own eyes, I shall but exalt that merit which you already suppose I rate too highly. Let me then, I entreat, no longer continue a course of life so discordant to my taste, and so little favourable to the object that you have in view. If you dread the unvariedness of our hours of tête-à-tête; if you consider these scenes as too favourable to remembrances which you do not wish me to cherish; suffer me to absent myself from Henhurst, and from you, my dear, my almost only friend, for a short time. I shall return with recruited spirits, stronger nerves, and, perhaps, with a better regulated will."

"You would quit Henhurst? You would leave me?" said Mr. Fitzosborn, in a tone of affright. "Where? to whom would you go?"

"I would go into Somersetshire," returned Caroline; "I would once again see those scenes of my infancy where first I learnt to think; where first my

mind was trained by gentle but steady discipline to self-control; where I was taught to prefer duty to inclination, and instructed in the nomenclature of truth. It would not surely be in vain that I should awaken in my mind recollections so favourable to the cause of reason and of virtue."

"And to whom would you go?" said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"I would avail myself," said Caroline, "of the so often repeated invitation of the worthy Mr. Somers: he asks it of me as a favour that I will once again let him see the young person for whom he has always been so kindly interested. In his house, in the company of himself and Mrs. Somers, I shall have every protection and every accommodation that your fears or your love, my dear sir, can wish me."

"But a journey of above two hundred miles!" objected Mr. Fitzosborn.

"The journey may appear long, but the absence will be short," replied Caroline: that day three weeks which takes

me from Henhurst, shall restore me to you ; shall restore me to my best friend, to my place of dearest residence ; and, I hope, restore me in such a state of spirits and temper of mind as will preclude the necessity even in your opinion, my dearest uncle, of a return to that regimen which palsies every faculty of my mind and body."

Mr. Fitzosborn could not but defer to Caroline's "pleaded reason;" and if he could have conveyed her into Somersetshire with a wish, she would not have remained another day at Henhurst: but the difficulties, the dangers, as his imagination represented them, of a journey of more than two hundred miles, affrighted his apprehension and withheld his consent.

Caroline, half by argument, and half by raillery, succeeded in bringing him to a more just estimate of the facilities of English travelling; and having acceded to all the conditions which he thought proper to make, such as that she should be attended by two men ser-

vants, and should not travel after sunset; she received his consent to the projected journey.

This arrangement was, in fact, equally agreeable to them both. Caroline found in it the gratification of a long existing wish, and Mr. Fitzosborn a relief from the perpetual harrassment of having Caroline for ever near him, and for ever absent. He began, indeed, to be weary of his own experiment; and found some repose to his mind in the hopes that Caroline would prove the better physician of the two.

CHAP. XX.

CAROLINE received from Mrs. Somers a joyful acquiescence in the proposed visit; and after a thousand reiterated adieus on her part, and as many repeated cautions on her uncle's, she quitted Henhurst, and set forward into Somersetshire.

The third evening brought her to Abbotscomb; where she was received by Mr. and Mrs. Somers with all the native politeness that benevolence and good sense can give.

On the sight of Mr. Somers, the interval that had passed since she had seen him last, disappeared from the mind of Caroline: the death-bed of her benefactress and dearest friend, the kind support of Mr. Somers in that distressful hour, with her hurried departure from the Grove, alone rested upon her imagination, and left no place for any other thought. Tears filled her eyes—

"Oh, sir!" said she, "when last I saw you!"

"My dear young lady," said the kind Mr. Somers, "let us not renew painful images. This friendly visit shows me that you are the same excellent and affectionate young creature from whom I parted with so much regret nearly five years ago. You have stood a fiery trial, and have stood it well: let us be thankful and happy, there is no cause for sorrow."

"You know not how much I lost," said Caroline, "when I lost my kind protectress."

"Yes, I do," returned Mr. Somers; "I know it all: but if you had not been thus proved, you would not have known yourself. All is well—all is as it should be: we will have no retrospect. This is a day of gala to Mrs. Somers and myself; you will not, I am sure, wish to sadden it."

Caroline wiped away the tears that had escaped from her eyes, and said, with the sweetness of an angel—"The gala is to

me : there is no remembrance of sadness which such kindness would not do away ; and my dear Mrs. Somers smiles upon me as if she would ratify all your flatteries."

Mrs. Somers was, indeed, one of the most benevolent of women ; and seeing in Caroline all that her imagination could conceive of beauty and graciousness, she sat looking on her with an expression of delight which went at once to the heart of Caroline. A shade, however, crossed her countenance for a moment.—“ Oh, madam !” said she, “ how happy would my good friend have been could she have seen you so much all that she wished you to be !”

“ Forbear, my dear !” said Mr. Somers ; “ Miss Fitzosborn wants refreshment. We have a great many things to talk over ; but we will talk of nothing just now that can give any of us pain.”

The wise Mr. Somers having thus called both his wife and Caroline to order, and the tea and coffee having made their appearance, these three friends soon

fell into a conversation equally gay and interesting. Caroline surprised her host and hostess by the variety of her inquiries, and the minuteness of her recollections. Not a person or name seemed to have escaped her memory. Every childish incident was recalled ; every spot of ground remembered : all seemed to have become sacred to her.

In such a field she had gathered the first cowslips of the year ; under such a tree she had eaten the earliest strawberries ; here she had expatiated free and uncontrolled, as the reward of diligence and docility ; and here she had expiated idleness or inattention by confinement.

Thus passed the evening ; and it finished by Caroline's declaring her intention of making an early visit to the Grove the next morning. The distance from Abbotscomb did not exceed a mile ; and as she learnt from Mrs. Somers that the present tenants were at this time from home, she promised herself the melancholy satisfaction of visiting the haunts of all her past pleasures at full

leisure, and free from the interruption of ceremony or observation. Mrs. Somers easily understood that Caroline would prefer being alone in moments when she must wish to give a free indulgence to the emotions of her heart; she therefore suffered her to pursue her own way, without any obstruction from ill-judged civility.

As soon as an early breakfast was over, Caroline set out alone for the Grove. It was a beautiful morning in June; the meadows were full of hay-makers; the cattle stood in groups under the shade of the trees, or found an asylum from their winged tormentors by plunging themselves knee-deep in the water. The air was full of perfume, and resounded with melody; repose and labour, gayety and pensiveness, were united. Caroline's mind was in harmony with the scene—if she felt past struggles, she felt also that they *were past*. If memory rendered her sad, hope made her cheerful. “There will come a time,” said she to herself, “when Edward will

accompany me through these scenes of my childhood ; when we shall look back on the loss of reputation and of fortune as a dream ; when we shall acknowledge, that in the bitterest moments of such deprivation the consciousness of rectitude was *more* than a compensation ; and we shall tread with a firmer step the path that in its progress is safety, and in its issue is bliss."

Caroline's train of thought was more than once interrupted by encountering some of her old acquaintance : all were known to her, to all she was unknown. None recognised the little girl with whom they had thought themselves so familiar, in the fine lady, on whom they gazed with awe and admiration. But the exclamations, as Caroline discovered herself, of—" Lord, miss ! is it you ? Ah, how you are grown !—God bless your heart ! I may say that, I hope, yet ! " showed that if the person was forgot, the character was remembered. And the inquiry, " And, madam, are you come to live with us ?—what a day would that

be!" proved how highly this character was estimated.

Caroline had a gracious word for all, and promised a visit to each individual cottage; but she disengaged herself as well as she could from their present importunity, and proceeded to the Grove.

She was readily admitted, on making herself known, within the house, and suffered to visit every room. This she did with so lively a remembrance of persons and scenes that were for ever past, as for the time banished every feeling of pleasure from her mind. But there was no eye to observe her; and she permitted the tears to flow, till her heart, discharged of its burthen, felt lighter in her breast; and looking once more around her, she arose to pursue her researches through the garden and shrubbery. She found all kept with a nicety which gratified her partialities; and she saw reason, as she looked on the offspring of her former cares in the vegetable world, to repeat the exclamation of her village friends--
 "How you are grown!"

She sat down under the shade of a plane-tree, which on the seventh anniversary of her birth had been planted by her own hand, as the commemoration of an epoch when she had passed the age of infancy. She recollected the instructive moral by which this act had been accompanied from the lips of more than maternal tenderness.

“ If this tree disappoint our hopes,” had said her affectionate instructress, “ the fault will not be in the tree : if Caroline prove ungrateful to our cares, the fault will be hers.”

Caroline thought that she still heard the words ; still felt the embrace by which they were accompanied ; still heard the prayer—“ Oh, may they flourish together ! and may the branches that have been trained by the hand of innocence afford a shelter to respected age !”

Caroline looked up, and blessed her God that so far she had not wholly disappointed the pious solicitude of her benefactress.

"Oh, my uncle!" said she, "how much more conducive to a virtuous self-control are scenes and recollections such as these, than the imbecility induced by dissipation! Here I should never dare to harbour any unworthy partiality."

As she said these words, she heard a voice crying out—"Never tell me; I will speak to her, if she was twenty fine ladies.—Trouble indeed! Have I not carried her upon my back twenty times, and never thought it a trouble?"

Caroline turned her head, and saw close to her Jenny, the old poultry-woman, her earliest favourite, and staunchest friend in all the scrapes of her infancy.

"Jenny!" said Caroline.

"Ay, madam! old Jenny. What, I warrant you, they told me I should not know you.—Not know my own dear Miss Carry?—why you are as like what you were as two peas; only taller, and slimmer, and paler:—and then you have a look about you, so commanding! as

if you would say, 'Jenny, do so;' and I have used to say, 'Miss Carry, you must not do so.'"

"And you shall say so again," said Caroline, taking her hand; "for I dare say I should be inclined to play your chickens as many tricks now as I used to do then."

"Ah, bless you! you never did any thing any hurt, though you used to put me into a twitter now and then. But, you talk of chickens:—ah, madam! I have no chickens to take care of now."

"How comes that, Jenny? I find every thing so much what it was, and every thing so neat and so nice, that I had hoped I should have seen you in your pretty cottage, with all your flock about you, just as formerly."

"Why, look you, madam," returned Jenny, "you know that cottage was not my lady's, nor yours, madam; and so when my lady did not want it any longer, and new people came, and they would have the fowls, I warrant you, up at the house; to be sure they thought the cot-

tage was too good for me: but they gave me another, and a pretty place enough it is. Yet it troubled me sore to leave the old spot."

"And who lives there now?" said Caroline.

"Nay, madam, that's more than I can say, or any of us. For first, my lord— you know, madam, it belongs to my lord— made it a sort of a thing they called a dairy-house; but, Lord bless you! no more like a dairy! He made all the milk must be in China dishes, and the butter a marvel; I think they call it *ay-don-marvell-tables*; and there were gimcrack churns and new-fangled presses; and the garden was made huge and spruce, and green crossings put up all to the house; and there were honeysuckles, and roses, and what not, all tied to them; and, to be sure, it looked mighty pretty; and all the gentry, far and wide, came to see it. But my lady did not like this out of the way place, so she would come no more; and then there was no want of a dairy, you know: and so

"and afterwards you shall show me where you live."

"Ay, that I will, and thank you too; and when you sit down on the settle, I shall think old times are come again."

Caroline made no answer, and stepped forward with so quick a pace, that old Jenny called out, "Bless you! I see you could run as fast as ever, if you would; but I shall never show you the way if you go so much before me."

"If I turn down here," said Caroline, "can I not see quite over the garden, and yet not be in any danger of being seen? I mean of giving the lady any offence?"

"Seen, indeed! How should such a lady know you? Besides, who cares if she is offended?"

"I care!" said Caroline, earnestly: and Jenny felt it was no longer the time when she could say, "Miss Carry, you must not do so!"

"Why now that's so like you—never would vex any body! Well, well, I see you are as good a lady as ever; but like

it's a pity that you should not see where you have played yourself many's the time. So just come round here, and you may see all in and about, and nobody; I warrant, be the wiser?"

Caroline took the turn advised; and soon saw all, and more than she wished to see. In an arbour, directly facing her, sat Miss Evelyn in the tenderest act of motherhood; a slight cloak shading, but not concealing, her employment.

Caroline became riveted to the ground for a moment; the next she attempted to turn from a sight that pierced her to the heart: but she trembled so with the effort, that she was forced to lay hold on the arm of Jenny.

"Mercy, madam! have you hurt yourself?" said the old woman.

Her exclamation made Miss Evelyn look up; and, on seeing how nearly she was observed, she rose in the greatest confusion, and wrapping the cloak close over the infant, hurried into the house.

"Ifackins, madam, she knows you!"

said Jenny: "but she's not for looking you in the face."

"Impossible, impossible!" said Caroline. "Come away, Jenny! I am sure I have done very wrong—been very impertinent. How could I be so curious?"

"And why should you not be curious after your own place, as it were? Never fret for that. The lady has been looked at before, no doubt, and by those who have done her more harm, or she would not so call upon Edward—a false-hearted wretch, I'll warrant him."

If Jenny had reason before to complain of Caroline's swiftness of movement, she had much more so now: she rather flew than ran; and, in spite of Jenny's entreaties to turn towards her cottage, made forward the directly contrary way.

"Then you will not look at my poor habitation, madam?" said Jenny in a piteous tone.

Caroline stopt—endeavoured to recollect herself—was not able to command a

thought—took breath—paused—tried to speak—and found herself unable to utter a word.

“Nay, madam, take time—you are quite out of breath. You look as if you were scared. Pray turn this way; we shall be at my door in a minute, and then you may rest.”

Mechanically Caroline followed Jenny; unconscious of what she did, and undesigning as to what she would do.

“See, madam!” cried Jenny in an exulting voice, as they turned short on the cottage, “here it is!—a nice, neat, pretty spot, though I say it, as needs be: and there’s a stone bench at the door; and you are so hurried and flurried, that you will like it better perhaps than going within the house.”

Caroline sat down, and asked for water.

“Water!” cried Jenny. “What, and so hot? And, madam, if you’ll believe me, I have not a drop of spirits, or any thing comfortable, if it were to save your life. What shall I do?”

“Pray give me some water,” said Ca-

Caroline: "I could drink nothing but water."

Jenny unwillingly complied. Caroline drank, and was relieved. Jenny looked wistfully at her.

"Well, I am sure," said she, "if I had thought how it would be, you should never have looked over the hedge at that strange madam. I wish she had been fifty miles off for my part. So agreeable and chatty as you were before, and now you have not a word to throw at a dog, as they say."

"No, no; not a word for a dog," said Caroline, endeavouring to collect her scattered senses; "but a great many for you, Jenny. It was so hot—and I walked so fast. But, come now, show me all about; you seem to have every thing that you can wish for."

Jenny, now in her glory, began to display her wealth and the excellence of her own management; told what a miserable hole it was when she first came to it; how she had rubbed and scoured; how she had pulled down and built up; how

she was advised by her neighbours ; and how she was wiser than them all. Opened her walnut cupboard, and exhibited her flower knot ; and was, in a word, as vain and as happy as if, like other improvers, she had spoiled all the beauties of nature by all the efforts of art. Caroline admired every thing ; praised the skill and contrivance of the proprietor of the whole ; gave an ample largess to old Jenny ; and saying that Mrs. Somers would wonder what was become of her, turned her steps towards Abbotscomb.

CHAP. XXI.

Mrs. SOMERS, impatient of the absence of her lovely guest, was already looking out for her, and, on seeing her approach, met her on the lawn. She had no sooner cast her eye on her, than she cried out with alarm, "Oh, my dear madam! I feared as much; this has been a painful visitation—so many painful recollections!"

"They have, indeed, quite overcome me," said Caroline.

"I should not have suffered you to go alone," said Mrs. Somers. "But come within doors. The heat and walk have been too much for you, if there were nothing else."

So saying, they went together into a cool and delightful room, the windows of which were shaded with a variety of beautiful twiners, and opening to a gar-

den, admitted the mingled perfume of unnumbered sweets. . . .

Caroline endeavoured to arouse herself, and to give the whole of her thoughts to the objects around her. Silence on the rack would scarcely have been a greater effort. She talked of the flowers, the sweets, of what she had seen, of all but that of which she thought, till the room seemed to turn round with her. Her penance was prolonged by the coming in of Mr. Somers, who, interested in every thing which he supposed would interest Caroline, travelled over again the same ground—inquired how she approved what she had seen—expressed a hope that she would think he had provided her with a good tenant—and concluded with observing, that she must have found every thing much as she had left it, except old Jenny's cottage. "And really," said he, "we must allow that *that* is improved; bating," added he, with a meaning look, "its inhabitant perhaps."

"That cottage did not belong to my aunt," said Caroline.

"No," replied Mr. Somers; "but I have often thought it was a pity that it did not; and once I was busy enough to intend asking you whether you would like to purchase it, for it might have been bought; but it is as well now that you did not, for I fear that we have no chance that the Grove should be preferred to Henhurst; and of course there would be no advantage in adding to your property in this part of the world."

"Perhaps it would be better to get rid of it altogether," said Caroline.

"Sell the Grove?" said Mr. and Mrs. Somers, both in a breath. "Why, dear young lady, you said last night that you would not part with it for ten times its value; that it was your birth-place; more a home than Henhurst; that it should never be let again, but that you would come down to it every year. Ah! I am afraid," added Mr. Somers, "my dear Miss Fitzosborn is a flatterer, and that

she thinks more of saying what will please than what she really feels."

"Oh no, indeed!" said Caroline, confounded rather by having said too much than too little truth; "but I hardly knew what I was saying. I have been pained and troubled this morning; and if every visit to the Grove was to be as distressing as my first has been, it might be better that the first was the last."

Her friends joined in assuring her that the case would be wholly different; and proceeding to apply remedies to evils that she did not feel, contributed nothing by all they said to the mitigation of her sufferings. Having undergone little short of martyrdom for some hours, Caroline at length made her escape to her own room; and throwing herself into a chair, gave way to a violent flood of tears. She wept for some time without a consciousness why she wept. Relieved, however, by this effort of nature, the power of thought returned, and with it all that energy of virtue which marked the character of Caroline. The bandage was

Supported by a humble but firm confidence in a Power superior to her own, Caroline endeavoured to resume her composure: she bathed her eyes with water; she pressed her hands to her heart in hopes to still its tumultuous beatings; and having remained without movement, exposed to the fresh air from the window for some time, she became sufficiently mistress of herself to proceed to such preparations as were necessary to her again appearing before them. She knew the kind attentions of her friends had collected a number of our country gentlemen, whom she was to meet at dinner; all as she was considered a person of quality should show the most marked respect to the representative of their state; so highly regarded in their neighbourhood. To such a company she felt that she ought to appear with an equanimity, and cheerfulness, and in that obliging passive way so much which takes its direction wholly from the wish of others; that her attention should be alive to the most trifling things; her answer prompt to the most insignificant

question ; her assent, her smile, her laugh, ready for all. She felt this ought to be so, and at the same time the impossibility of its being so : she resolved, however, that the effort should be made, that self should at least for one day be wholly forgotten. As she cast a glance on the glass at the moment of quitting her chamber, she was shocked to see how ill her countenance seconded her designs. Her cheek was pale, her eyes languid, her step measured, and unelastic. She blushed at the unworthy thralldom in which she felt herself held : the blush, and its accompanying feeling, restored the colour to her cheek, and the brilliancy to her eye : she hastened down stairs, and presented herself to the guests with a grace and animation all her own.

She found assembled many of those whom she had known in her earliest youth ; and she found all so willing to please her, that it was impossible not to be pleased. This day produced as many invitations as there were separate families ; and Caroline found that the time

allotted for her absence from Henhurst would be too short to answer all the demands that good-will and hospitality made on it. To prolong this absence she had no wish. Every hour that she remained in Somersetshire now seemed to her a punishment; and had it been possible to depart, she would not have continued there another day. All she could do to satisfy the expectations of so many contending claimants, was to lend herself to the arrangements that the impartiality of Mr. and Mrs. Somers should make for her; and all that she could do for herself, was to adhere steadily to the day already fixed with Mr. Fitzosborn for her return.

Every day having now its appointed engagement, there remained but few hours for Caroline to give to the concerns of her poorer neighbours, and none but those which ought to have been spent in repose, to give to the interests of her heart. But this was a fund from whence Caroline was apt to draw too liberally; and after a morning passed in attending

to every wish and every want of those who looked up to her bounty, and an evening spent in civilities that oppressed her, and conversation that wearied her, she retired—not to sleep, but to reason, to wonder, to lament, and to weep.

Having charmed, by the sweetness of her manners, all who had approached her; and having excited in the breasts of Mr. and Mrs. Somers the warmest affection and interest; having cheered the drooping and relieved the indigent, and arranged the continuance of her benevolence when her presence should be withdrawn, she found herself at liberty to depart: but she saw not the moment of separation from friends so kind and partial as Mr. and Mrs. Somers approach, without a very sensible pain. As she made her adieus—"You must visit me at Henhurst," said she. "I can insure you a welcome there, as warm and as flattering as that which you have afforded me."

"We *will* visit you at Henhurst," replied Mr. Somers; "and oh that it

might be at your wedding! My dear young friend," added he, "happy as you make all who approach you, you are not happy yourself. I have seen it in the turn of your eye; I have heard it in your suppressed sigh; I have a confirmation of it in your every effort to seem otherwise. This must not be. You are excellent in the indulgence of every feeling, for every feeling is that of virtue: be still more excellent, be *great* in the victory over those which make you unhappy."

Caroline struggled from the parting embrace in which Mr. Somers held her as he said these words.

"Farewell!" said she, and sprung into her carriage.

CHAP. XXII.

ONCE at liberty to deliver herself over to the mercy of her own thoughts, she gave way to the crowd of reflexions that rushed in upon her. But amidst this crowd she could make no selection which might either reconcile inconsistencies, or bring comfort to her mind. No hypothesis could restore Edward to the height of excellence from whence he was fallen; and yet the conviction of his unworthiness brought not with it any power to expel him from her heart: and of the variety of painful sensations by which she was at once assailed, she found self-humiliation the most oppressive. She wearied herself with reasonings, which, from whatever point they set out, all ended in the same conclusion; and she exhausted herself with forming resolutions, which she felt to

have no influence on her mind. In the same melancholy and dispiriting circle her thoughts continued to move in an unvaried succession; no light sprang up to brighten the shades of guilt, or to guide the wish to do well: she condemned the object of her love, and she despaired of herself. Such was the state of her mind during the whole of the journey; and harassed, depressed, and discouraged, she presented herself before her uncle so altered in her appearance, that he started with alarm.

"The weather is hot," returned she, answering his kind solicitude: "the roads dusty." As she said these words, she threw back her cloak, and took off her gloves.

"And the ring gone?" said her uncle, fixing his eye on her hand.

Caroline felt the moment to be decisive: now if she deserted herself she felt she could never again recover her self-approbation.

"But not, I trust, for ever!" said she, with an effort that seemed to her the

excess of heroism. "I hope you will one day replace it on my finger; but, till that day comes, take it, my dear uncle! into your own custody, and at present indulge me so much as to inquire no farther."

"Tell me only," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "is it marriage or degradation that has torn from your finger this gage of your own and of another's integrity?"

"Degradation," said Caroline, in a smothered voice.

"Then this moment may I replace it," said Mr. Fitzosborn. "Caroline does not, *cannot* indulge in a preference to vice."

"Oh, no! but some time must elapse before she is able to forget the virtue which she has so long been accustomed to consider as real."

"The virtues are real," said her uncle; "they exist in the bosom of Mr. Beaumont. Shall the vices of an Edward have more sway over your mind than the virtues of a Beaumont?"

"I hope not," replied Caroline, faintly:

“ but at present my heart would be an unworthy exchange for that of Mr. Beaumont. My uncle! I acknowledge in the fullest sense the power which my promise has given you over me; my reason, my principles, are all on your side; and when I find myself more grateful to the divine superintending Intelligence for an escape from an union with vice, than grieved by the destruction of the fancied virtue that was so dear to my imagination, I will with thankfulness and satisfaction resign myself to your direction.”

“ And do I hear you avow a distinction between your inclinations and your principles?” said the rigid Mr. Fitzosborn.

“ No!” said Caroline, warmly; “ there is no such distinction: from this moment I disclaim all such. Knowing what I know, I would prefer the grave to a connexion with Edward: but feeling as I have so recently felt, it is impossible at present to think of becoming the wife of any other man. When the pain which

the vices of Edward have inflicted is lost in the recognition of the virtues of Mr. Beaumont, then, my uncle, may the memorable ring be given and worn, as the gage at once of his love and my rectitude."

"And do you bid me look forward to such a period?" said her uncle.

"I do, with confidence," said Caroline, kindling as she spoke. "The work is begun, the healing balm is applied. It is true the wound still smarts, but this is rather a proof of the efficacy of the application than an indication of the hopelessness of the evil; a little time, and all will be well."

"Admirable girl!" said Mr. Fitzosborn, "be it as you say: and however you may have been mistaken in *your* model of imagined perfection, I shall find *mine* complete."

Caroline now set herself seriously to the accomplishment of the task which good sense and right feeling equally dictated; and she found with surprise, that the forms which at a distance had

appeared so redoubtable, vanished into air as she approached to attack them.

In the art of seeing objects in their just light, in the science of a true nomenclature, Caroline found the secret of that imperfect happiness which is alone allowed to man below.

In the depravity of Edward she acknowledged a legitimate cause for sorrow, and she mourned it as a Christian and a friend; but in the bitterness of her own disappointment she was compelled to confess rather the mortification of self-love than the genuine sorrow of real misfortune, which virtue may sanctify, and which religion does not disavow. Of all that *ought* to give a relish to life, of what *was* she despoiled? Of an idol, which had no existence but in her own imagination; of a heart, which, if it had ever owned her sway, was not worthy of her sovereignty. Fortune, health, friends, intellect, and virtue, remained; and should she say, and should she allow herself to believe, that she was miserable? Should she disappoint

the rational purposes and kind wishes of her best friend, rather than forego the indulgence of a feeling of her own, unfounded as it was on any principle, on which she professed to regulate her conduct? She was ashamed of the sentiment that opposed the conclusion suggested by her reason; she was resolute that she would not be governed by it; and in spite of the inexpressible reluctance with which she thought of marriage, in spite of the pain which still lay throbbing at her heart, she resolved to turn her thoughts to Mr. Beaumont as the companion of her future life, and to banish all sadness from her countenance.

The result of this determination equally surprised and delighted Mr. Fitzosborn. He dared hardly trust his senses when he saw Caroline with an aspect at once composed and cheerful; when he heard her converse without distraction, and found her ready to concur in every scheme of amusement; bland and diffuse in company, easy and hopeful when

alone. He observed, indeed, that she grew thinner, and that the colour on her cheek faded : but that which he had not dared to hope would be done at all, he could not expect would be done without effort : and his affection and good sense alike taught him, that nothing on his part should be precipitated, and that he had only to wait quietly the issue of a resolution so wisely taken, and so steadily pursued.

The paths of virtue issue in happiness : the course may be longer or shorter, but the termination is infallible.

Caroline was destined to meet her reward earlier than she had presumed to hope ; and she met it in a form that she had not looked for.

CHAP. XXIII.

SOME months had now passed in the progressive attainment of self-command, when one evening, as Mr. Fitzosborn and Caroline were sitting in a covered seat, in a retired part of the flower-garden, Mr. Fitzosborn ventured to inquire of Caroline whether he might be allowed to invite Mr. Beaumont to Henhurst. The question at the moment was unexpected, and caused a sudden convulsion in the frame of Caroline, which forced the blood from her heart into her cheeks, from which it as instantly retreated, and left her pale as death.

The word "undoubtedly" was the only word that she could utter: but she pronounced it articulately and with an unbroken voice.

"My Caroline's triumph is then complete!" said Mr. Fitzosborn, exultingly.

"I have found the perfection I sought. Great God, I thank thee!"

Caroline, overcome by the pious tenderness of her uncle, threw herself into his arms, and burst into tears.

"These are not tears of reluctance? these are not tears of regret?" cried he, in alarm.

"Oh, no!" returned Caroline! "they are tears of gratitude, of affection. I say with you, my dearest uncle, 'Great God, I thank thee!'"

"The words will be echoed still by another mouth," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "from many mouths; for the happiness of my Caroline and her Beaumont can never be a selfish one."

"Oh, most truly said!" cried a voice, which they both instantly knew to be that of Mr. Beaumont. "I come to renounce all selfish happiness, but I come to bestow it on those whom I love better than self. Edward is innocent; even of bad taste he is innocent: there is 'no mistress in the wood' he is worthy of all that fortune and love can do for him."

"Impossible!" cried Mr. Fitzosborn, sternly.

"Alas, it cannot be!" said Caroline, in a voice scarcely articulate.

"*Cannot be!*" said Mr. Beaumont.

"My dear madam, why not? May not the darkest night terminate in the brightest day? I have pledged my life for Edward's integrity, and I come to prove it. Edward has been the victim of friendship and self-abandonment without example. Charles Pynsynt——"

"Charles!" interrupted Caroline. "Has Charles Pynsynt any thing to do in this matter?"

"All and every thing," returned Mr. Beaumont. "You know the transaction that hurried him from England at a moment's warning; you know that all his hopes of a future re-establishment in life hung on the favour, the active patronage of Lord Evelyn: but you do not know that the man who looked for preservation to the father, had already undone the daughter. This was the sole secret that he did not confide to the sympa-

thizing, the affectionate Edward. It was hoped that it might have remained a secret from all but the unfortunate authors of it; yet the possibility of the contrary was not left unprovided for. Charles well knew how safe a guardian of his infant fortunes, how impenetrable an out-work of his threatened reputation, he left behind him in Edward. In every contingency the partner of his apprehensions and his guilt was directed to refer herself to Edward. In her hands was deposited a letter to be used, if circumstances should require such an assistance, addressed to Edward, where a full disclosure of all that it was necessary for him to know was made; accompanied by the most solemn adjurations to preserve a secret, the discovery of which would ruin his friend, and effectually deprive him of every hope that any future hour would enable him to make the only reparation of which his fault would admit. The occasion for the use of this letter occurred. It was sent to Edward, enclosed in one from the object of its so-

licitude, so indicative of despair and desperation, as took from the heart of humanity all option on the manner of acting. A fellow-creature was to be snatched from destruction, a friend was to be preserved from want and infamy. Oh, my dear madam!" said Mr. Beaumont, suddenly turning to Caroline, "what is it that you and I would have had our dear Edward have done? Even that which he did:—forget himself, forget the interests of his fortune and his love (for Edward's heart had long been in the keeping of another); and turning aside the barbed dart of obloquy and reproach from the bosom of his friend, receive it deeply in his own."

"And what, my dear sir, is there impossible in all this?"

"Why, my dear madam, cannot this be?"

"What tale of romance are you telling us?" cried Mr. Fitzosborn. "Of what chivalrous knight, who thus plays with death and danger as with puppy dogs, are you speaking?"

"It is no tale of romance I tell: it is of no chivalrous folly of which I speak," returned Mr. Beaumont: "it is simple, unadorned truth that I utter; it is of the emanations which flow as naturally from the Christian principles and the Christian character, as rays of light from the sun, of which I speak.—'Do as you would be done by.'—'Love your neighbour as yourself.'—'Seek not your own.'—'Be perfect.' In these few simple principles we shall find the rule of Edward's conduct; in the strength of a well-disciplined mind we shall find the instrument of it."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "you pour these words into very incredulous ears, I can tell you. But proceed; let us have the whole of this miraculous display of human excellence before us."

"And are *you* too incredulous?" said Mr. Beaumont, in a tone of reproach to Caroline. "Are the virtues, the sufferings, the triumphs of Edward indifferent to you?"

" Oh, no, no!" said Caroline, bursting at once from the silence which she had hitherto preserved, yet covered with intolerable confusion, " none of all these are indifferent ; but surprise, astonishment—my senses are confused, confounded. Yet the virtues of Edward find with me a ready belief; his sufferings, and his triumphs, the warmest, purest sympathy."

" Oh, too excellent, too charming, Miss Fitzosborn!" cried Mr. Beaumont, " do not contaminate my better feelings with the taint of envy. Do not make me feel that the man whom I profess to love may be *too* happy."

" But we are not told," said Mr. Fitzosborn, " how this mighty secret has been revealed. We are not arrived at the moment when the cord of romantic generosity, stretched too tight, snapt asunder; when Edward forgot his friend, and thought only of himself."

" No such moment ever did arrive; no such moment can arrive," said Mr. Beaumont. " Faith led the martyr to

the stake, and constancy supported him there. There, too, the sacrifice would have been consummated, had Edward, as he was preeminent, been *singular* in generosity; but, for the honour of human nature, this was not so.

“ Charles Pynsynt no sooner learnt all that his friend had done and suffered in his cause—and he learnt not this from the pen of Edward—than every selfish consideration faded from his mind: a moment was not lost by him in endeavouring to repair the evils which his faulty conduct had produced. A letter to Lord Evelyn revealed the whole guilty transaction. He ‘acknowledged that he had deserved the ruin which the withdrawing of Lord Evelyn’s favour would bring: he presumed not to aspire to the distinction of being allowed to become a member of a family which he had disgraced: all that he dared to plead for, was a complete and public vindication of the conduct of his friend; for himself he was, he would be, whatever Lord Evelyn should determine.”

" Horror-struck as Lord Evelyn was by such a disclosure, his honest heart rejoiced in an exculpation that restored to merit so distinguished as Edward's a reputation only more illustrious from the temporary shade by which it had been obscured. He waited on him instantly; he apologized for the wrongs he had done him; he referred to himself the reparation that should be made. Shall I repeat the words of Edward? They will make even the cold heart of dear Mr. Fitzosborn glow.

" ' For myself, my lord, I ask nothing; I have simply done my duty; but if I may be allowed to hope any favour from your lordship, let it be exerted towards my friend. My lord, he has greatly erred, but he has greatly suffered; he has been guilty of vice, but he is not vicious; he has excellent, he has superior qualities; adversity has given him principles, founded on which these qualities will become virtues. To your daughter he is sincerely attached; give her to him as a wife: the part that I

have taken will then be easily understood; and if your lordship will grant me your friendship and your countenance, my character will be vindicated without any explanation which can compromise the reputation either of your daughter or my friend."

"Excellent young man!" cried Lord Evelyn, "be it as you have so wisely, so kindly thought. *My* countenance, *my* friendship! the honour of both will be to me. I even aspire to a still higher honour. I have another daughter: you know her; you know that she is not unworthy of love. If you can love her she shall be yours, with a fortune of twenty thousand pounds."

"Edward then," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "is to be the son-in-law of Lord Evelyn?"

"I doubt that," said Mr. Beaumont, dryly; "but the manuscript is here torn, and I can tell you no farther."

"And is this story fact?" said Mr. Fitzosborn.

"Plain, unvarnished fact," replied

Mr. Beaumont; "the whole town is talking of nothing else. Edward is seen every where arm in arm with Mr. Evelyn; not with a more assured step or more erect countenance than in the days of his disgrace, but with the sun-beams of benevolent pleasure streaming from his eye, and the glow of hope and self-approval on his cheek. But all is insufficient to his happiness till his acquittal is signed by the individuals who, next to his God and his conscience, it is his dearest hope to please. It is in vain that every other door is opened to him while that of Henhurst is shut."

"It is no longer shut," cried Mr. Fitzosborn; "it will never be again shut, for Caroline here shall keep the key."

"Oh, my uncle!" said Caroline.

"Dearest madam!" said Mr. Beaumont, "accept the office, and use it instantly. Edward stands without, and waits for admission."

"Stands without? waits for admission?" cried the uncle and niece both in a breath.

"Is here!" said Edward; and threw himself at the feet of his beloved, his now assured Caroline. "Oh, pardon me all the pain I have given you!" cried he, "Oh, pardon the presumptuous hopes I have entertained: I am still and ever must be nothing but what you wish me."

"Oh, Edward!" said Caroline, glancing a fearful look at Mr. Beaumont. "Rise! — My uncle —"

"Forgive me, dear sir," said Edward; "forgive the impulse of a heart, so long restrained in the expression of its feeling, yet while it beats, it must beat with affection and gratitude towards you."

"Yes, yes; no doubt, young man," replied Mr. Fitzosborn, "no doubt of that: but I see there are warmer feelings in that heart than either gratitude or affection — and —"

"My friend," interrupted Mr. Beaumont, "I have conducted you safely into port. I know the happiness that awaits you there. Were I a hero like you, I might be able to be a spectator of that happiness; but it is enough for

such a common mortal as I am to have promoted this happiness, and to rejoice in it. Till I can be more the thing I wish, the thing I ought to be, farewell!" And before the last word was half pronounced he turned, and disappeared in a moment.

"Even so," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "we learn the imperfection of human happiness. My beloved children! blest in your virtues, blest in your affections, even at this moment of a bliss that seems too great for mortality to support, the sigh of compassion rises in your bosom, and the tear of regret trickles down your cheek."

"But this sigh, this tear," said Edward, pressing the hands of Caroline between his, "are the sigh and tear of virtue; if they are not happiness, they lead to it."

"Oh, they are happiness itself!" cried Caroline: "they are the tribute of gratitude to friendship. Mr. Beaumont deserves all from Edward and from me."

"And what," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "does Caroline deserve from Edward?"

"Every thing short of adoration," cried the enraptured Edward, "is the due of Caroline."

"And how will Caroline repay so extended a homage?" asked Mr. Fitzosborn.

"By resigning all right to it," said Caroline, blushing.

"And thus, in spite of me and my wise resolutions," said Mr. Fitzosborn, "the marriage that I disapproved, and the heirship which I set aside, must both take place, and I am compelled to acknowledge that no arrangement could be better. Children, I am your puppet; you play with me at pleasure, and make me what you will."

"Oh, my dearest uncle!" said Caroline, "we will make you the happiest of men; and we shall be the most obliged and grateful of human creatures."

"Away then," cried Mr. Fitzosborn, "and open your hearts to each other; while I send for my lawyer, and set all hands a going, that no new discoveries may again overthrow our plans."

CHAP. XXIV.

MR. FITZOSBORN walked towards the house; and the two lovers struck into an adjoining wood, "nothing loath" to avail themselves of the privilege allowed them. Here, in tracing the commencement and progress of their sentiments for each other, Caroline had the gratification to find that she had reigned paramount over the affections of Edward, even from the period when the lovely girl had first grown into the accomplished woman; and that as she must find the solution of all of coldness and gravity that had ever alarmed her tenderness or mocked her hopes in the inferiority of his situation and the humility of his expectations, so might she recognise in the overflowing spirits which had upon one occasion surprised and half offended her, the newborn hope recently received, which the intimation of his uncle's intentions in his favour had generated.

"I know," said Edward, "how ill I kept my uncle's secret at that moment;

nor could I escape the imputation of impertinence by any thing short of a full disclosure of all that he had forbade me to reveal: but you were kindly indulgent; and I was quit for a little self-reproach, which, I acknowledge, was more than compensated by your kindness."

If Caroline's most delicate scruples were satisfied by the knowledge she had obtained of the state of Edward's affections for her, Edward had not less reason to be contented with the confessions that he drew from Caroline; and after some hours' walk in the wood they returned to Mr. Fitzosborn, in the mutual possession of every feeling in the heart of each that could contribute to the happiness of either.

Mr. Pynsynt and Miss Evelyn had had but a small share in their conversation; and when they rejoined their benevolent friend, Caroline had as much to learn as himself as to all that was necessary to complete Mr. Beaumont's unfinished tale. The whole, however, could be told in few words.

Miss Evelyn was by this time returned to her family, and had assumed the name of Pynsynt; and by the care of her friends any doubts as to her right to this designation were so skilfully screened from the eye of curiosity, that not even Lord and Lady Enville were apprised of the truth of the matter. In learning that Lord Evelyn had recognised Charles as his son-in-law; that he was ready to portion his daughter as amply as if she had married with his consent; and that he still charged himself with the care of Charles's establishment in the world, they knew all that they were interested to know. Of the moral conduct of their son, or the discretion of the young lady, they thought little: the connexion that he had made was at once splendid and lucrative, and they gave themselves no trouble as to the means by which it had been brought about.

Charles was to be allowed to return to England, apparently that he might participate in the advantages of the act of grace that had been passed; but in fact that he might become a

husband, and convey his wife and child to India.

In declining the offered hand of the eldest daughter of the house of Evelyn, Edward had acknowledged the state of his heart, and the ground of his hopes with respect to Caroline; and Lord Evelyn, eager to obliterate every trace of the injury that he had sustained in the cause of his daughter, exacted from him that a disclosure of the whole truth should form his vindication with Mr. Fitzosborn and Caroline. He took upon himself the task of relating the tale, unmutilated, to Mr. Beaumont, whom he highly esteemed, and who had courageously been the frequent defender of Edward; even to Lord Evelyn himself. Nor had Charles Pynsynt been less generous in his conduct towards his friend. No sooner had he learnt from Miss Evelyn the price at which Edward had preserved their secret, than he not only gave Lord Evelyn all the information necessary to restore Edward to his fair fame, but he wrote also to Edward himself, releasing him from all obligation of secrecy;

and exacting from him that he should not, by suffering for his sake, either in his fortune or his love, lay a still heavier burthen of favour and remorse on a mind already almost oppressed beyond sufferance by these feelings.

Thus Edward, restrained by no scruple, opposed by no duty, gave to the history of his conduct and the disclosure of his love all the sincerity and warmth that could establish the rectitude of his actions, and the truth of his affections; and Caroline and her uncle exulted alike in the lover, the kinsman, and the man!

In a few weeks Edward led his beloved Caroline to the altar: the fated ring became the gage of their mutual happiness; and as Edward placed it on the finger of Caroline—"Now, indeed," said she to herself, "shall we be severed by death alone!"

In the science of "calling things by their right names" may be found the secret of characters so uncommon as those of Edward and Caroline.

The bounty of Mr. Fitzosborn made them rich—their virtues made them

happy. Neither dazzled by the glitter of sentiment, nor confounded by the misapplication of terms, their feelings were directed to a legitimate end, and their understandings became the champions of truth. To their unsophisticated intellect no qualifying epithet could christianize pride or authorize revenge: the licentiousness that invaded the peace, or the extravagance that ruined the fortunes of a family, were with them something more than the "frailty of human nature." The misuse of time, on which hung the interests of eternity, passed not with them for "agreeable trifling;" and in professing themselves to be Christians, they believed themselves bound to become patterns of *meekness, humility, and moderation*.

Reader! whoever thou art, go and do likewise!

THE END.

